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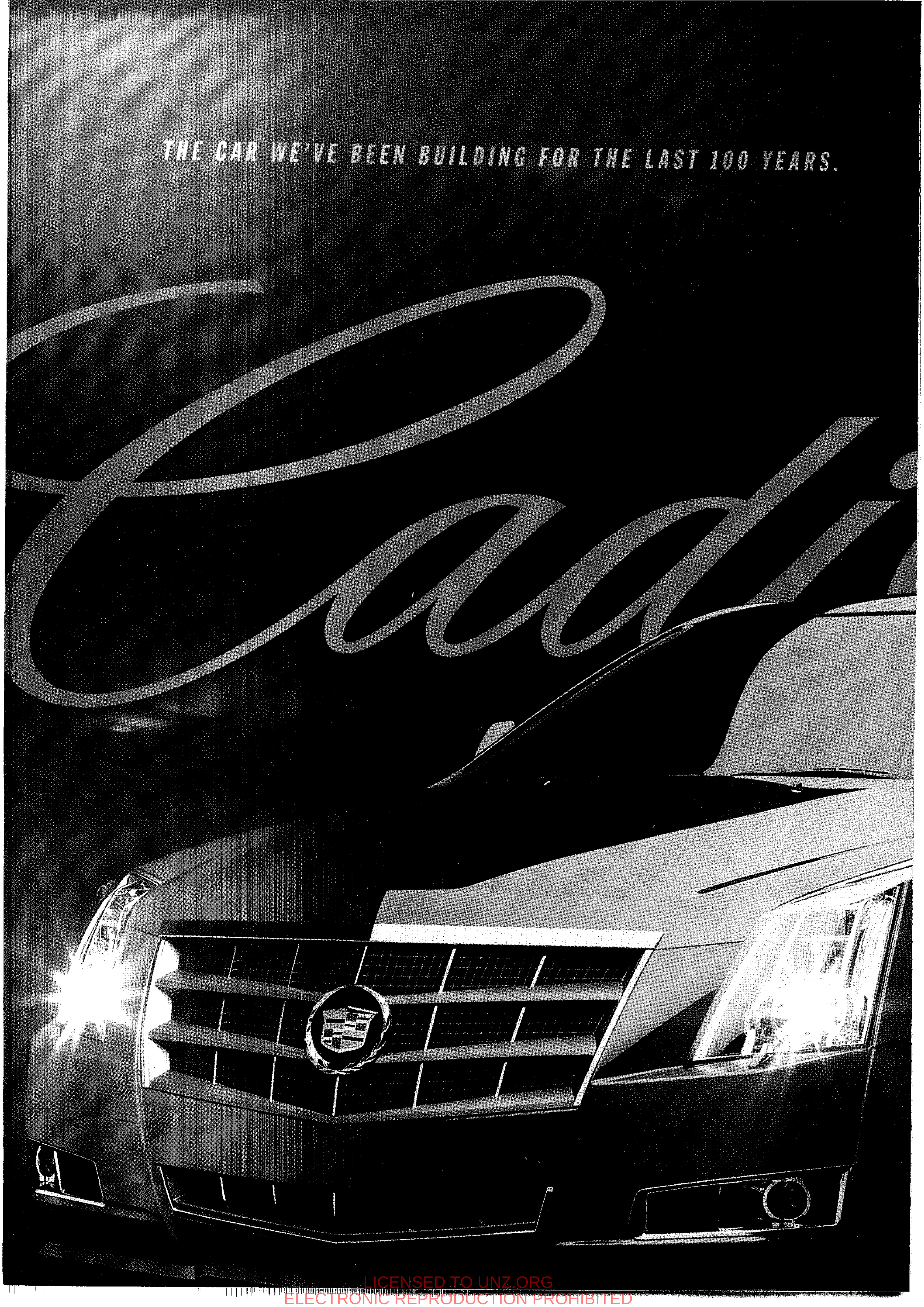
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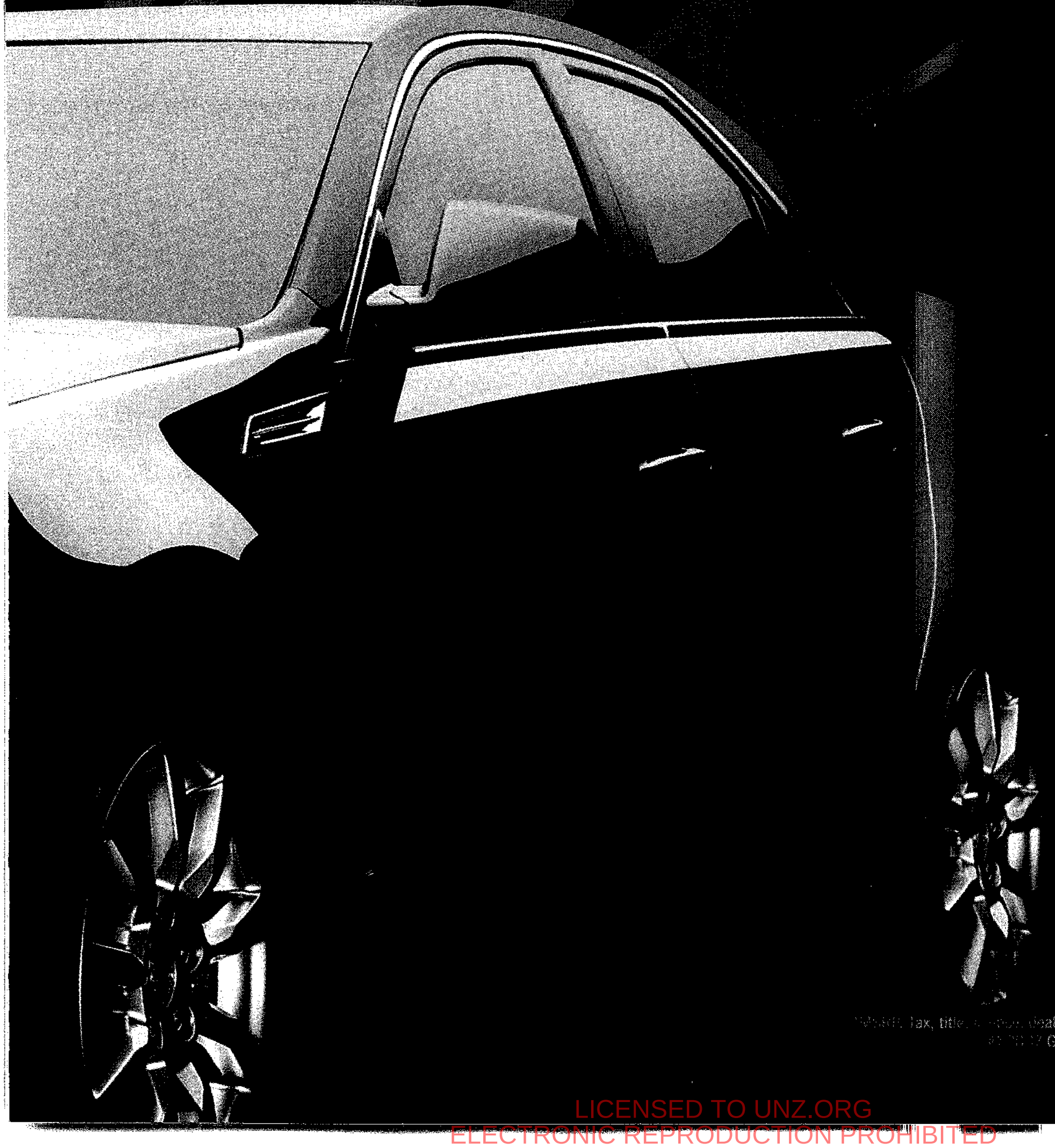

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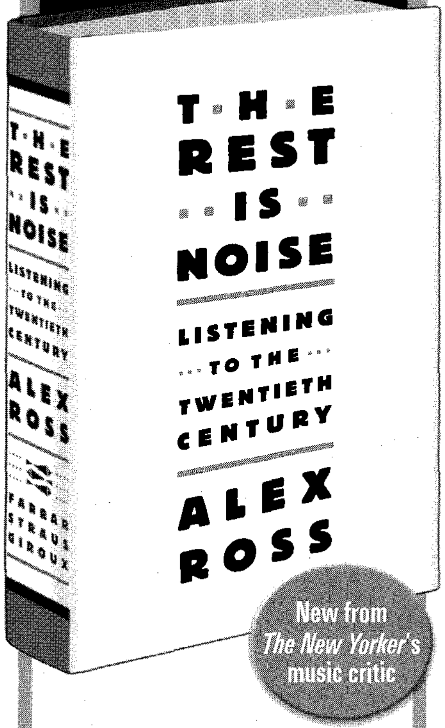
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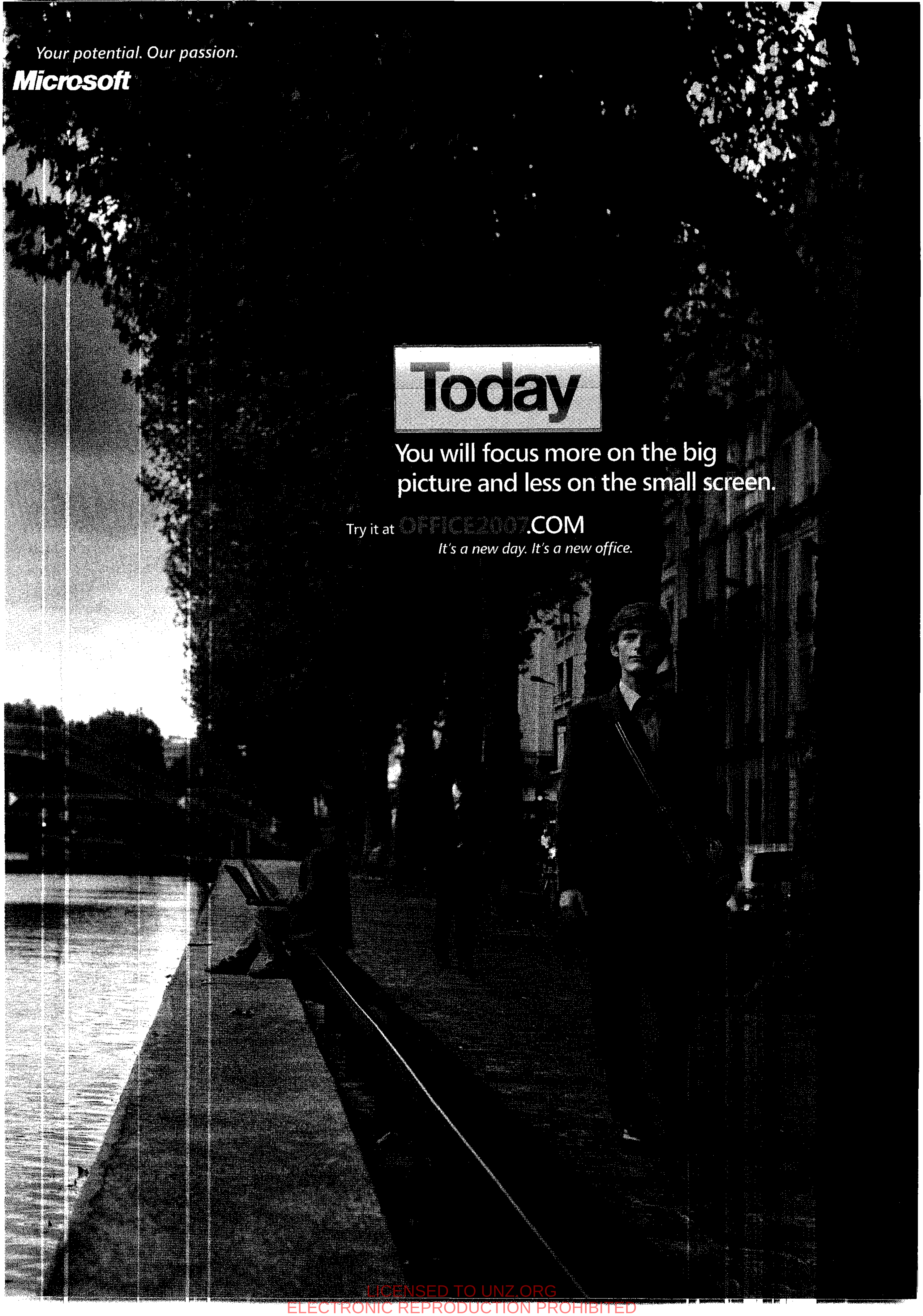
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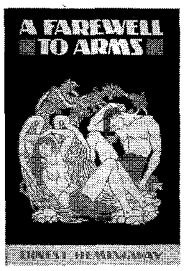

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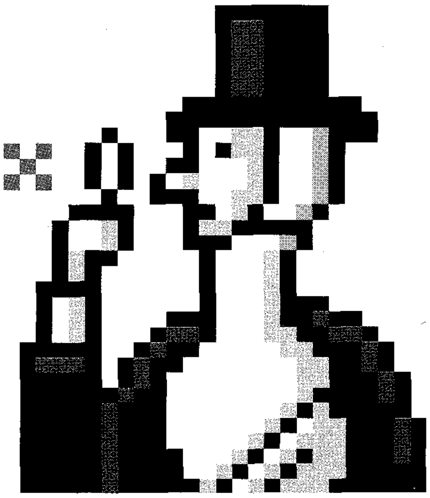
Jean Valentine (Poem, p. 88) received a National Book Award for "Door in the Mountain: New and Collected Poems, 1965-2003." Her new book of poems, "Little Boat," came out last month.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 92) writes the magazine's television column.

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 96), the magazine's senior drama critic, is working on a biography of Tennessee Williams.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
Blogs by *Hendrik Hertzberg*, *George Packer*, *Dana Goodyear*, and *Sasha Frere-Jones*. / *Ken Auletta* talks with Jeff Zucker, of NBC Universal. / The New Yorker Out Loud: *Jeffrey Toobin* talks about Clarence Thomas and the Supreme Court. / *Antonya Nelson* reads a short story by Mavis Gallant on the monthly fiction podcast. / Slide shows: drawings by Georges Seurat and sculpture by Martin Puryear. / Barry Cipra's birth-year theorem. / The Film File: thousands of movie reviews. / Animated cartoons, the Caption Contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events across the country.



THE MAIL

COLOR-CODED MUSIC

Sasha Frere-Jones argues that indie music underwent a "racial re-sorting" in the nineteen-nineties, and holds up Arcade Fire as an example of one group that is devoid of any rhythm-and-blues influences in its music (Pop Music, October 22nd). However, Arcade Fire's most popular song from its live concerts is "Wake Up" (from 2004's "Funeral"), which ends with a very raucous—and clearly Motown-influenced—passage that recalls the Supremes, among other nineteen-sixties R.&B. sounds. And there are several other indie bands that weaken Frere-Jones's thesis, among them the White Stripes (who unabashedly borrow from the blues tradition that Frere-Jones describes); Spoon (whose recent song "The Underdog" was produced by Jon Brion, whom the band happens to share with the hip-hop star Kanye West); Josh Rouse (who made an entire record dedicated to the stoned-soul sounds of 1972); and My Morning Jacket (whose song "Off the Record" is a clear descendant of Isaac Hayes). Pop music ("indie" music included) is, and shall remain, in a constant give-and-take among aesthetic traditions.
John Moye
Chapel Hill, N.C.

The differences between the music of new rock groups like Arcade Fire and Wilco and older groups like the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds have mostly to do with the organic changes that any art form undergoes over a period of forty years, as well as the natural evolution of the musical influences that they draw upon. Instead of discovering Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf during a musician's formative years, many rock musicians of my generation are raised on Sonic Youth and Hüsker Dü. It is not a matter of a conscious choice to shy away from black music but a natural expression of the culture from which this music has sprung.
Raphael Ruttenberg
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Frere-Jones laments the current demise of, as he puts it, American pop-musical "miscegenation." Though there was probably never a golden age of miscegenation in American pop-music history, there certainly have been some golden moments: Benny Goodman's mixed-race band at Carnegie Hall, Buddy Holly and the Crickets at the Apollo Theatre, or any number of the adventuresome sixties bookings by Bill Graham. What Frere-Jones does not mention, and what I've found increasingly egregious, is the culpability of the music business in disallowing artistic cross-pollination. With the barriers erected between musical market niches, how could miscegenation thrive? How likely would it be for a current-day Carl Perkins with a current-day "Blue Suede Shoes" to top the pop, R.&B., and country-music charts simultaneously?
E. D. Schragg
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Frere-Jones writes that by the mid-nineties "the potential for embarrassment had become a sufficient deterrent for white musicians tempted to emulate their black heroes," as well as a fear that doing so would be seen as "an act of appropriation, minstrelsy, or co-optation" in an age of political correctness. Of at least equal, if not greater, importance was the way in which black music had become overtly political. While it may have been easy for Led Zeppelin to ask, "Wanna whole lotta love?" in the same way that Willie Dixon had, it is significantly more difficult for a white indie rocker to pull off "Nobody told us today, in other words, you're still a slave. No matter how much money you got, you still ain't shit" (as Dr. Dre and company rap in "The Day the Niggaz Took Over," the fourth track on 1992's "The Chronic").
Katri A. Stanley
New York City

•

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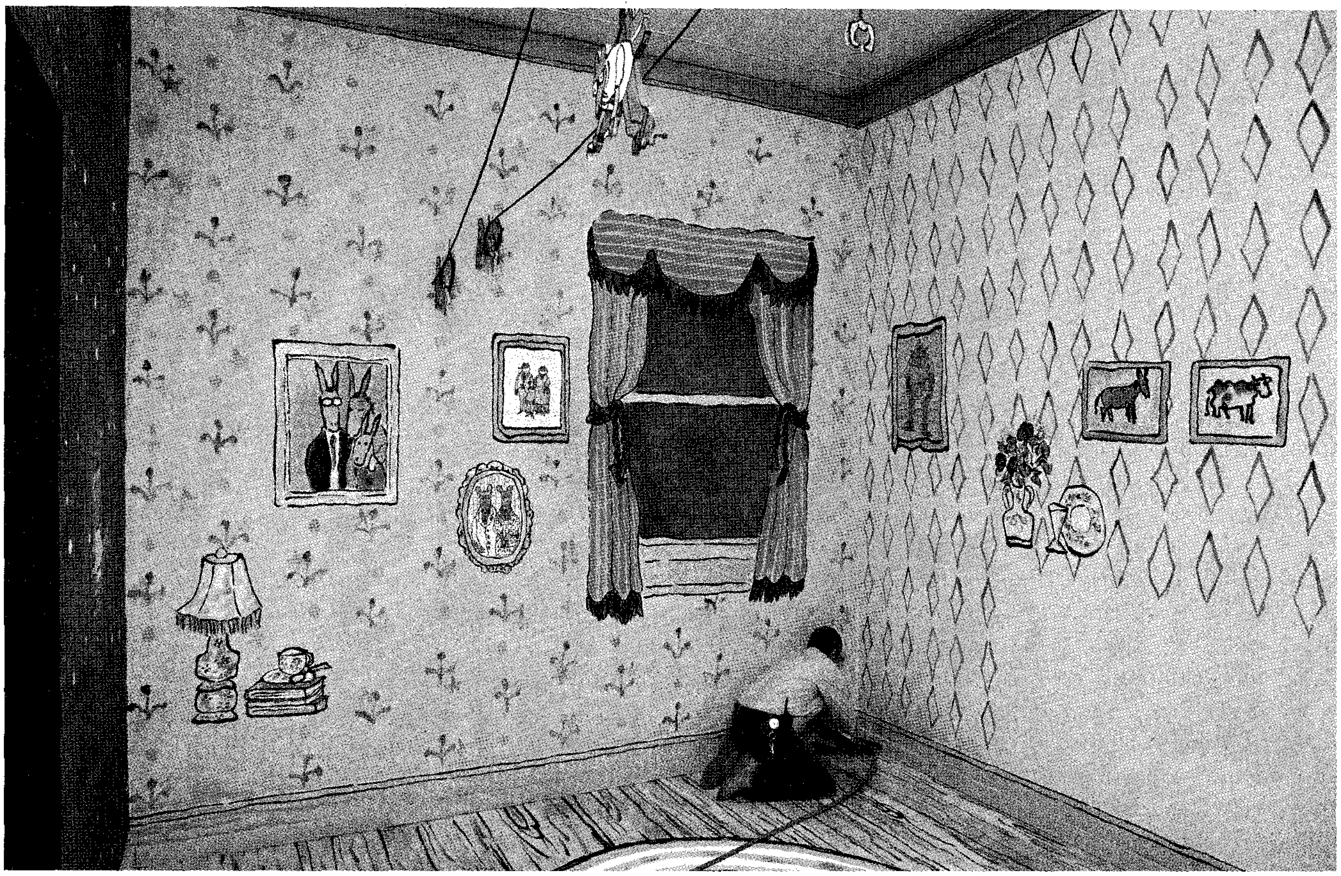

"The Art of William Steig," at the Jewish Museum. Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
JOKERS WILD

Conor McPherson's "The Seafarer" premièred at London's National Theatre. Now the drama—in which a group of Irish tipplers engage in a game of cards on Christmas Eve—comes to the Booth Theatre, where McPherson has his Broadway directorial début. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
IT AIN'T HIM, BABE

Todd Haynes's new film about Bob Dylan, "I'm Not There," employs a series of actors, including Cate Blanchett, Heath Ledger, Christian Bale, and Richard Gere, to interpret the musical icon's life. An equally diverse group of musicians—Cat Power, Joe Henry, My Morning Jacket, Lee Ranaldo, Yo La Tengo, and many others—come to the Beacon Theatre this week to perform Dylan's songs and celebrate the film's release. (See page 10.)

ART
LINE ITEM

Alan Saret's ethereal wire sculptures helped put post-minimalism on the map in the nineteen-sixties. The Drawing Center surveys the artist's "Gang Drawings," an ongoing series of works begun in 1967 that are created using fistfuls of colored pencils, yielding spontaneous clusters of lines. (See page 15.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
SOFT TOUCH

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center devotes two concerts to the mysterious and contemplative music of the French master Gabriel Fauré, with performances by such artists as the tenor Paul Groves and the violinist Elmar Oliveira. (See page 17.)

MOVIES
BEHIND THE NEWS

The CinemaEast Film Festival, at the IFC Center, offers a program of films from the Middle East and its diaspora, including "Rome Rather Than You," an Algerian drama about young people struggling to emigrate, and the experimental documentary "Tehran Has No More Pomegranates." An Alliance Française French Institute sidebar features Maghrebi-French films. (See page 22.)

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY
This Steppenwolf transfer by Tracy Letts ("Bug") is about the disappearance of an Oklahoma family man. In previews. (Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BINGO WITH THE INDIANS
A new play by Adam Rapp, about an East Village theatre company that travels to a small New England town. The Bats, the Flea's resident company, star; Rapp directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 9. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE CONSTANT COUPLE
At the Pearl, Jean Randich directs this comedy by George Farquhar from 1699, set in London, about a colonel trying to win over a popular lady. Previews begin Nov. 13. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
Marilyn Campbell and Curt Columbus adapted Dostoyevsky's novel, in which a poor student commits murder to prove a theory; Michael Halberstam directs. Part of the GoChicago! Festival. Opens Nov. 7. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

CYMBELINE
Michael Cerveris, Martha Plimpton, and Phylicia Rashad star in this Shakespeare romance. Mark Lamos directs. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

DR. SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS! THE MUSICAL
The classic holiday story, adapted for the stage, returns. Jack O'Brien directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 9. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION
Hank Azaria and Jimmi Simpson star in a new play by Aaron Sorkin, about Philo Farnsworth, the boy genius who invented television, and David Sarnoff, the head of R.C.A., who challenged his patent ownership. Des McAnuff directs. In previews. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

A HARD HEART
Kathleen Chalfant stars in this play by Howard Barker, in which a fictitious country is invaded. Will Pomerantz directs the Epic Theatre Ensemble production. In previews. Opens Nov. 11. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

IS HE DEAD?
Michael Blakemore directs this recently unearthed comedy by Mark Twain, about an artist who fakes his death in hopes of inciting a bidding frenzy for his work. Norbert Leo Butz stars. Previews begin Nov. 8. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE JOY LUCK CLUB
Pan Asian Repertory presents Susan Kim's adaptation of Amy Tan's novel. Opens Nov. 7. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LITTLE MERMAID
Francesca Zambello directs an adaptation of the film, with a book by Doug Wright and music and lyrics by Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, and Glenn Slater. In previews. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

MAKE ME A SONG: THE MUSIC OF WILLIAM FINN
A cast of four performs this musical review of songs by the composer-lyricist for "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." In previews. Opens Nov. 12. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

OH, THE HUMANITY AND OTHER GOOD INTENTIONS
Marisa Tomei stars in the première of a new work by Will Eno, five short plays about everyday life. Jim Simpson directs. In previews. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

PETER AND JERRY
Edward Albee has expanded his 1959 drama "Zoo Story," adding a new first act, about the earlier life of the character Peter. Bill Pullman, Dallas Roberts, and Johanna Day star. Pam MacKinnon directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 11. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE PIANO TEACHER
The Vineyard Theatre opens its season with the première of a new play by Julia Cho, about a retired piano teacher. Kate Whoriskey directs. In previews. (108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

PUMPGIRL
The Irish playwright Abbie Spallen wrote this drama, set in rural Ireland, about a gas-station attendant, the race-car driver she is obsessed with, and his wife. Carolyn Cantor directs. Previews begin Nov. 8. (City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

QUEENS BOULEVARD (THE MUSICAL)
Signature Theatre Company presents the première of a musical by Charles Mee, in which a groom gets caught up in the city streets on his wedding day. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

REBEL VOICES
A rotating cast—including Wallace Shawn, Lili Taylor, and David Strathairn—reads this stage adaptation of Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove's book "Voices of a People's History of the United States." Rob Urbinati adapted and directs. Previews begin Nov. 10. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101.)

RICHARD III
Classic Stage Company presents the Shakespeare history play, starring Michael Cumpsty. Brian Kulick co-directs, with Cumpsty. In previews. Opens Nov. 13. (136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

THE SEAFARER
Conor McPherson's new play, set in Dublin on Christmas Eve, follows two aging brothers, one of whom is blind. The cast includes Ciarán Hinds, Conleth Hill, and David Morse. McPherson directs. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SECRET ORDER
Marrimack Repertory presents a thriller by Bob Clyman, about a young scientist on the brink of finding a cure for cancer. Previews begin Nov. 9. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THINGS WE WANT
The New Group presents the world première of a play by Jonathan Marc Sherman, directed by Ethan Hawke. Paul Dano, Peter Dinklage, Josh Hamilton, and Zoe Kazan star. Opens Nov. 7. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN
Mel Brooks has adapted his 1974 film into a musical; Thomas Meehan co-wrote and Susan Stroman choreographs and directs. Roger Bart, Megan Mullally, Sutton Foster, Andrea Martin, and Christopher Fitzgerald star. In previews. Opens Nov. 8. (Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.)

NOW PLAYING

A BRONX TALE
In Chazz Palminteri's semiautobiographical play about Italian-American life in the Bronx in the nineteen-sixties, Palminteri takes on eighteen roles, including those of his younger self, his father, and a neighborhood gangster. Palminteri certainly has a great deal of energy—that's part of his charm and his sexiness—but the show does little more than take us on a superficial tour of the Italian-American signposts that "The Godfather" and "The Sopranos" have already embedded in our culture. As helmed by the veteran director Jerry Zaks, "A Bronx Tale" is ultimately sunk by its weakest element: its sentimentality. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/07.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
Kevin Kline and Jennifer Garner star in Edmond Rostand's 1897 play. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

FRANKENSTEIN
This musical adaptation, by Mark Baron and Jeffrey Jackson, is not to be confused with the Mel Brooks extravaganza up the street, which is to say it isn't funny—unless you are able to extract an ironic chuckle from this unholy monster mash of strobe lights, thunderclaps, candelabras, animated projections, and overblown pop ballads. Hunter Foster ("Urinetown") plays the tortured "modern Prometheus," and Steve Blanchard—bare-chested, ominously lit—is the corpse he zaps back to life, only to be abandoned to a world of alienation, cruelty, and synthesizers. Baron and Jackson should be credited for their loyalty to Mary Shelley's book, but what they've derived from it is pure period schlock. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

TABLES FOR TWO
KEFI

222 W. 79th St. (212-873-0200)—Kefi, Michael Psilakis's casual Greek outpost, looks imposing from the outside—it's set in the garden level of a stolid limestone town house on the Upper West Side—but once down the steps and through the heavy door you find yourself in an awkward lobby-bar, with shrunken white benches posed in a face-off. The space previously housed Onera, Psilakis's first effort at high-end Greek (Anthos, in midtown, is his second), and was transformed in a single day by the staff themselves, who hung drapes and lanterns and replaced the fancy furniture with narrower, more crammable versions. In the dining room, at the back, the high-decibel, rapid-turnover ambience gives Kefi the hectic feel of an airport food court besieged by people of no discernible relation to one another: professorial types in sandals and socks; habitués of Lincoln Center in jabots, clinking glasses with a "Chin-chin!"; ponytailed twenty-somethings bearing Banana Republic shopping bags. Neighbors swiftly become confidants. On a recent night, one young lady was overheard confessing, "I almost went to the Guggenheim today, but I was afraid I'd have *too much time*"; another broke into hysterics over her date's pronunciation of "mous-sa-KA." (The correct Greek way, for the record.)

The food, though, is often revelatory in its sharpening of familiar, classically Greek flavors. A banal-sounding "selection of spreads," for instance, features a voluptuous pale-rose taramasalata. Meatballs are surprisingly light and airy, with a sauce forcefully studded with garlic cloves and shards of olive. Grilled octopus melts quickly in the mouth; curlicues of fried shallots set off bombs of salt amid creamy sheep's-milk ravioli; cinnamon sweetens the delicate strands of pulled braised rabbit. The moussaka comes "broken," in steamy, disintegrating layers, because it's made fresh, the ground beef and béchamel tossed in the pot to order. Each bite sends a ripple of heat through the chest, like a shot of ouzo.

It's almost enough to make you well disposed to your voluble neighbors and the hurtling wait staff, who are raffish and indefatigable, if occasionally a bit too carefree. One, asked for the name of a decadent potato concoction (*skordalia*), just shrugged. "Beats me," he said. "They don't make us learn Greek here." (Open nightly for dinner. Dishes $5.95-$15.95.)

—Ligaya Mishan

THE GLORIOUS ONES
A new musical by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, based on Francine Prose's novel about a troupe of commedia-dell'arte actors in seventeenth-century Italy. Graciela Daniele directs. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAMLET
In Elizabeth LeCompte's hair-raising "Hamlet"—set in neither the past nor the present, but rather in a theatrical wormhole where the two uncannily collide—the Wooster Group enacts the play like a hologram against a grainy projection of Richard Burton's "Theatrofilm" version, from 1964. With startling precision, the performers (including Scott Shepherd, as the prince, and Kate Valk, as both Gertrude and Ophelia) mimic every detail of the film—hand gestures, head turns, even jumps in the reel, which cause the actors and the set to jerk abruptly. Occasionally, they ask the projector to fast-forward through a scene or speech. Told in this dualized and unforgettable style, the story itself becomes the ghost, haunting a Hamlet refracted by time as well as by his own splintered psyche. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

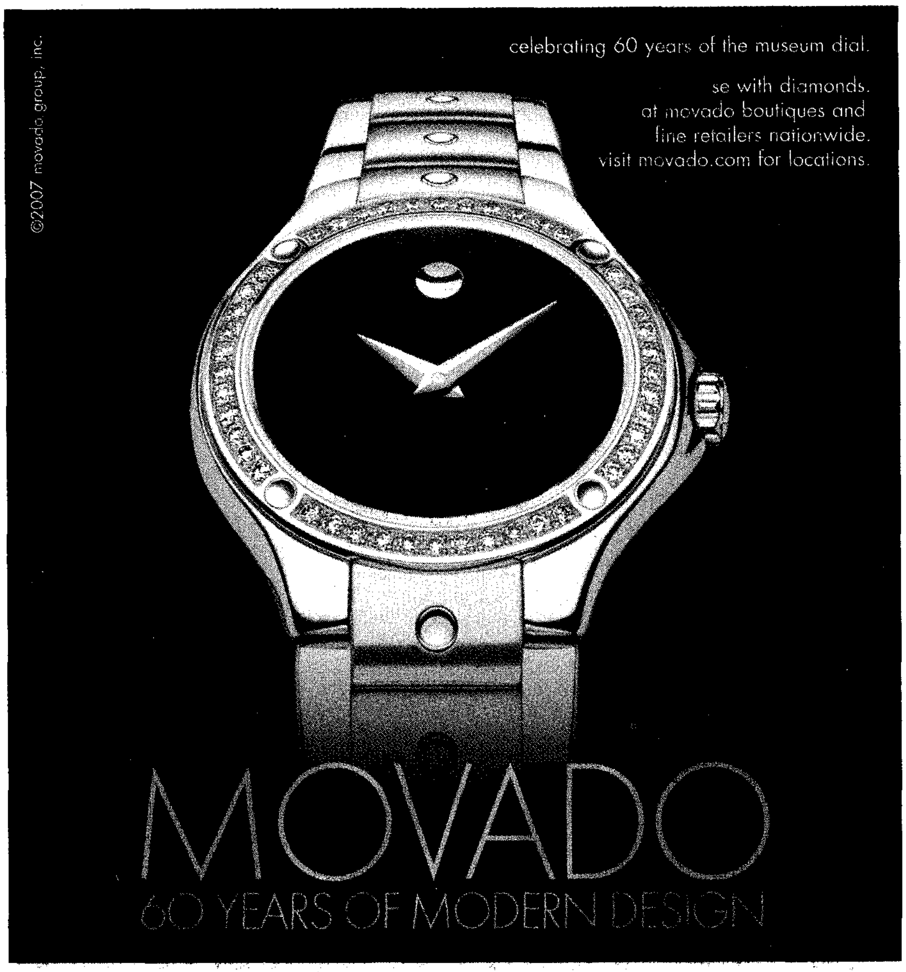
THE OVERWHELMING
In J. T. Rogers's wonderfully messy, ambitious drama, set in Rwanda in 1994, a white American academic named Jack Exley (the excellent Sam Robards) has arrived in the town of Kigali with his black American wife, Linda (Linda Powell), and his moody son from his first marriage, Geoffrey (the exceptional Michael Stahl-David). While Geoffrey connects with a local worker through Michael Jackson songs, we head farther into the country's interior, and into the hierarchy of class within Rwanda, which will, in short order, precipitate the country's hideous tragedy. The lesson that Jack and his family learn at the heart of Rwanda's darkness is how awful life can be for all of those who know power only through hatred. (11/5/07) (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

ROCK 'N' ROLL
Brian Cox, Sinéad Cusack, and Rufus Sewell star in Tom Stoppard's new play, directed by Trevor Nunn. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SPEECH & DEBATE
The Roundabout Underground's inaugural work, directed by Jason Moore, is an entertaining, at times hilarious play by the promising young playwright Stephen Karam. The plot concerns three alienated Oregon high-school students: Solomon (Jason Fuchs), an intense and funny cub reporter, who wants to expose a sex scandal at the school newspaper; Howie (Gideon Glick), a new-in-town gay student with a cruising habit, who has information that Solomon needs; and Diwata (Sarah Steele), a frustrated singer and actress, who wants to use the school's new debate club as a forum to solve the problems of all three. Though Karam's plot is a bit overstuffed, his dialogue and musical interludes are great fun, and Sarah Steele is terrific. (111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BLACK WATCH:** St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779. Through Nov. 11. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DIE MOMMIE DIE!:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **FUERZABRUTA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E. 212-239-6200. **GONE MISSING:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **JUMP:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100. **MARGARET CHO'S THE SENSUOUS WOMAN:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-352-3101. **NONE OF THE ABOVE:** Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **PYGMALION:** American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **THE RITZ:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.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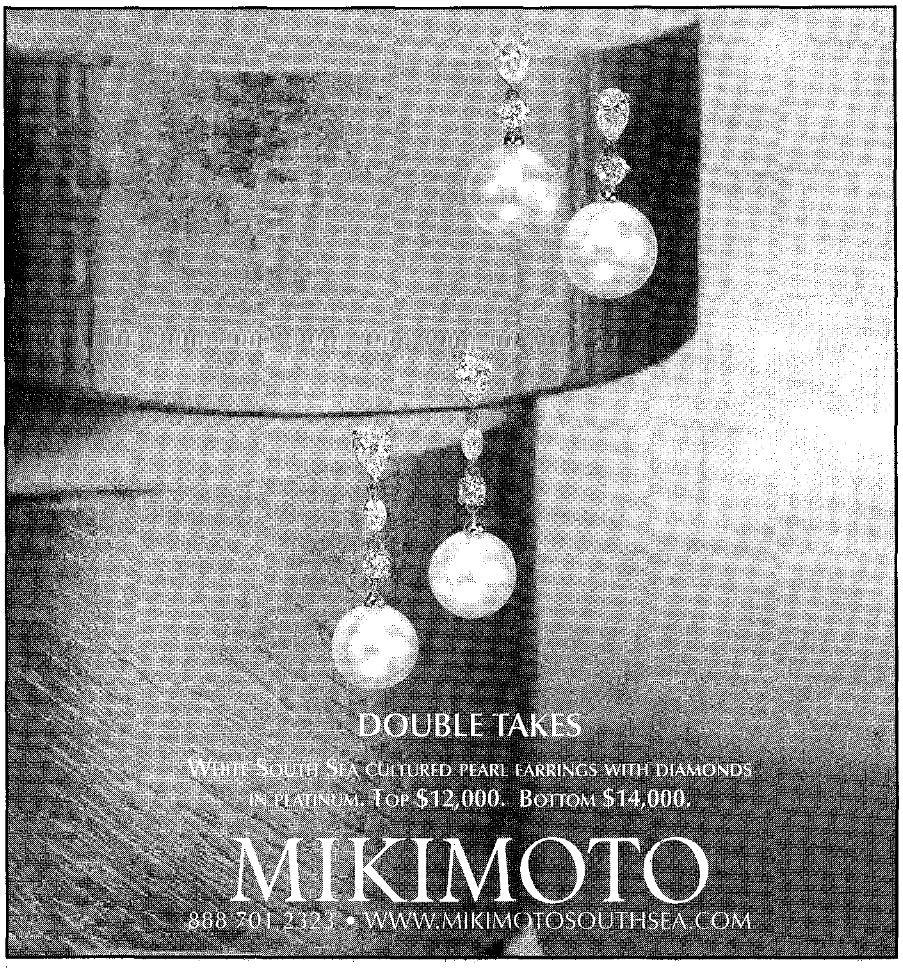
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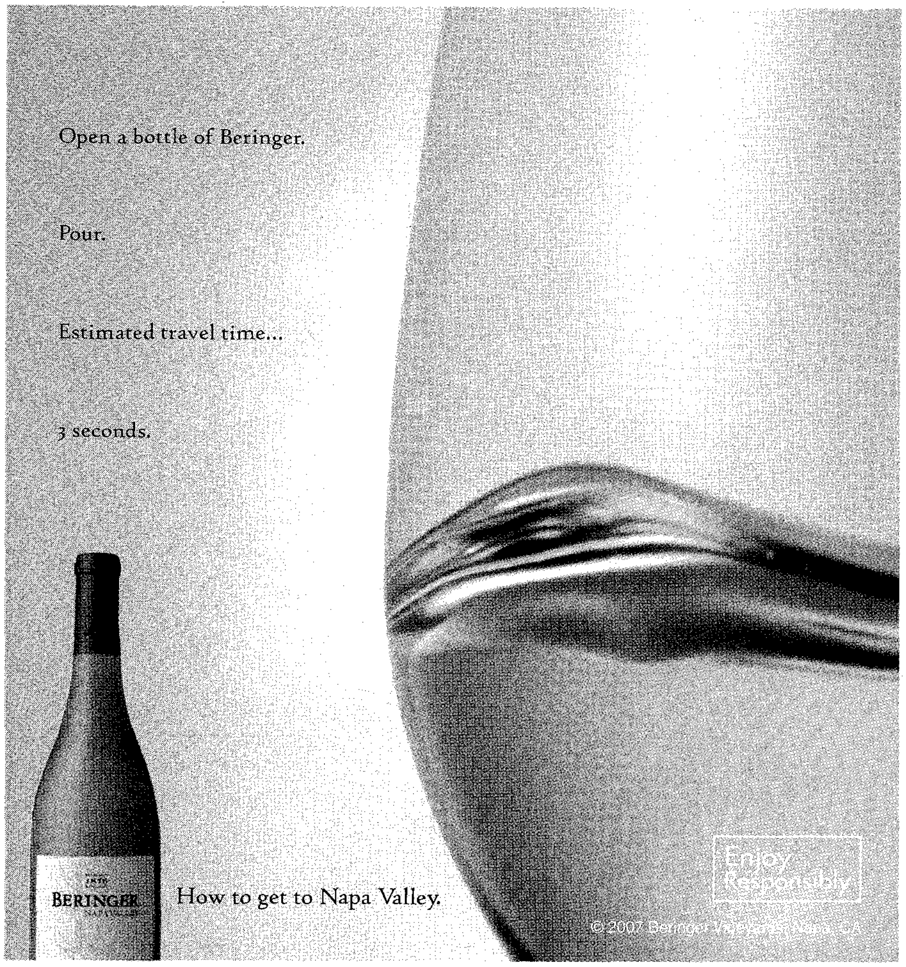
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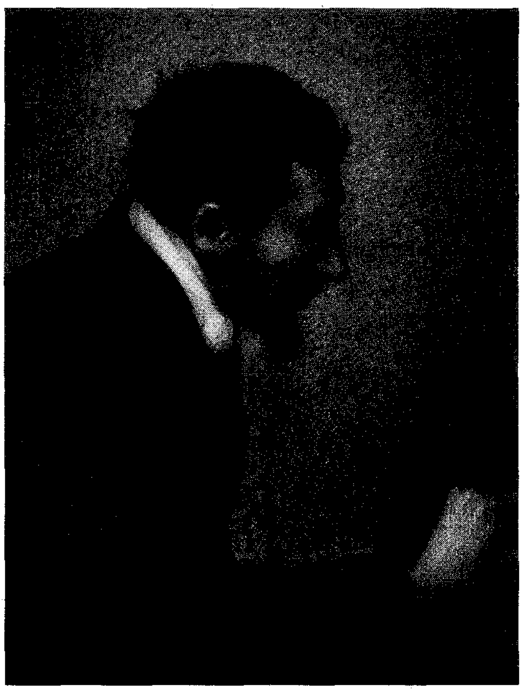
GEORGES SEURAT: THE DRAWINGS
THROUGH JAN. 7, 2008



GEORGES SEURAT: THE DRAWINGS is made possible by The Starr Foundation. The Museum acknowledges a generous grant from the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust. Major support is provided by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Additional funding is provided by Susan G. Jacoby, The Norman and Rosita Winston Foundation, and Cultural Services, Embassy of France in the United States.

Georges Seurat. Aman-Jean. c. 1882-83. Conté crayon on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Stephen C. Clark, 1960 (61.101.16). Photo © 1989 The Metropolitan Museum of Art

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 12-13: The octogenarian blues master **B. B. King** may need to sit down to perform these days, but he still delivers more passion with a single bent note from his trusted guitar, Lucille, than acolytes half his age.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 7: **"I'm Not There: In Concert."** There's no better interpreter of Bob Dylan's work than the man himself; his live versions of his songs can bear little resemblance to the album version (or any previous rendition, for that matter), so the musicians lined up for this show have their work cut out for them. **The Roots, My Morning Jacket, J Mascis, Yo La Tengo** and **Buckwheat Zydeco, Mason Jennings, Joe Henry, John Doe, Michelle Shocked** and **Jimmy LaFave, Mark Lanegan,** and many others will do their best, in a benefit for the nonprofit educational programs 826 National and 826 Valencia.

BLENDER THEATRE AT GRAMERCY
127 E. 23rd St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 10: **Juliette and the Licks.** Though she first came across as a dilettante, the actress Juliette Lewis has shocked all tongue-clicking doubters with her band's obstreperous rock. A couple of respectably incendiary albums are further proof of their hard-driving intentions. Nov. 12: The **Pipettes,** out of Brighton, England, are a stylish trio of women who favor polka-dot dresses, synchronized dance moves, and celebratory pop in the classic Phil Spector mold.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 9: **Dr. Dog,** from Philadelphia, makes endearing trifles full of shaggy guitars and heart-grabbing three-part harmonies; its live shows draw a dedicated crowd. Nov. 10: The Guns N' Roses tribute band **Mr. Brownstone** is fronted by Sean Greenhalgh, who is a member of a slightly more famous and esteemed act, the exuberant indie-rock ensemble **Clap Your Hands Say Yeah,** which has a show here, too, on Nov. 13.

EUROPA
98-104 Meserole Ave., at Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint, Brooklyn (718-383-5723)—Nov. 11: The blistering din of **Melt-Banana.**

GLASSLANDS GALLERY
289 Kent Ave., between S. 1st and S. 2nd Sts., Brooklyn (718-599-1450)—Nov. 9: The multimedia cabaret party **Maison du Chic** returns with the electronic-music group **Services,** the artists **Martha Colburn** and **Shana Moulton,** and other acts well worth cab fare to and from this outer-borough experimental-art space.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 9: The **Cult,** hoary veterans of the eighties post-punk boom, trail a legacy of big guitar riffs and earnest howling—as well as clichés and Spinal Tap-ish shenanigans—in their wake.

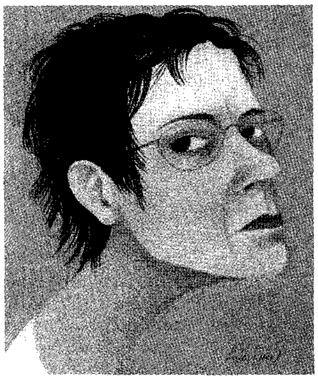
HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Nov. 11: Belfast's **Stiff Little Fingers** matched the abrasive guitars of the Sex Pistols and the political sloganeering of the Clash, and, thanks largely to the gruff vocals of the lead singer, Jake Burns, put their stamp on the burgeoning punk scene of the seventies. Though they never made much of a commercial impact, the band delivered one essential record, 1979's "Inflammable Material," and became an influence on their nation's biggest rock act, U2.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 7: The wry local songwriter **Ethan Lipton** and his orchestra. Nov. 8: **Chuck Prophet** first staked his claim to the fringes of the charts some twenty years ago as a

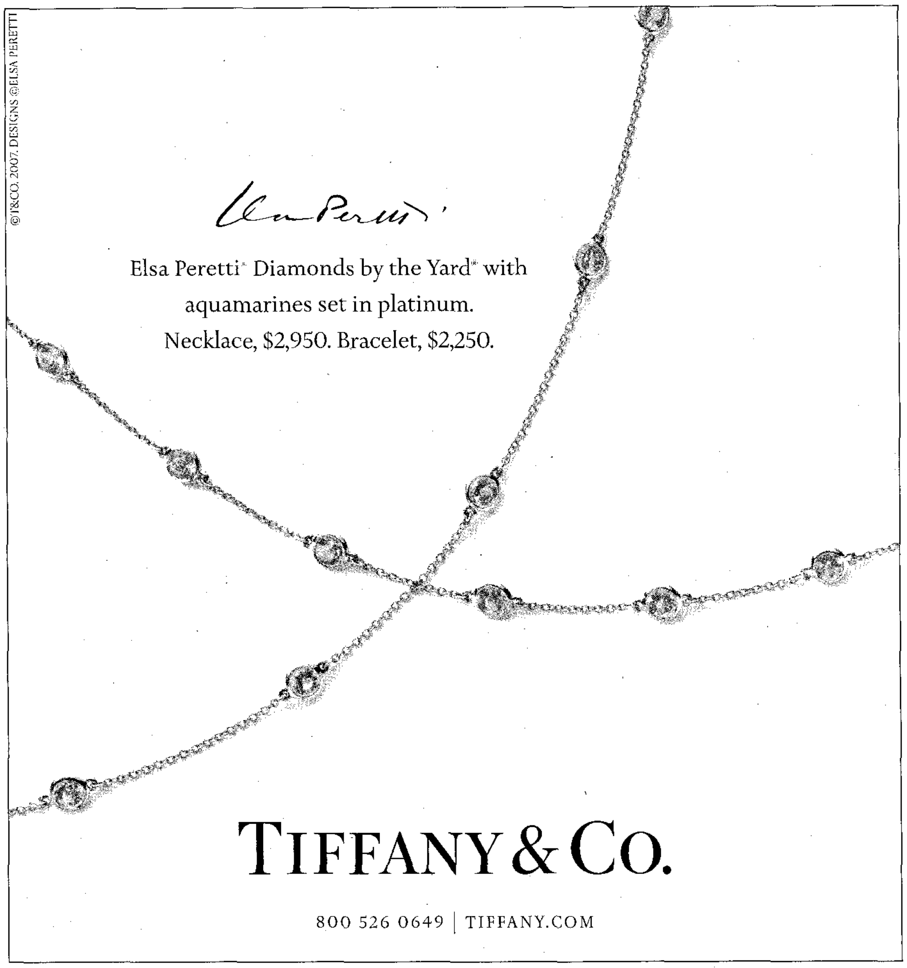
ANA JUAN

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
JUDSON RIDES AGAIN

Judson Dance Theatre, the anti-establishment collective of the nineteen-sixties, and Grand Union, its seventies outgrowth, are often thought of as being earnestly conceptual. They were, sort of. Like their predecessors in modernism's "permanent revolution," these choreographers took their medium as their subject. (What is dance? Does it need a story, or music, or professional executants?) But they also had a good time. Their roots lay as much in Dada as in phenomenology. This week, several pieces that Douglas Dunn, Grand Union's funniest choreographer, created in the seventies will be performed by his company at Dance New Amsterdam. On Nov. 18-19, as part of the Performa 07 biennial, Yvonne Rainer, Judson's diva and its chief polemicist, will show her new "RoS Indexical"—inspired by the scandalous Stravinsky/Nijinsky "Rite of Spring" but also drawing on Groucho Marx—at the Hudson Theatre. Among the dancers are Sally Silvers, queen of deadpan, and the excellent Emily Coates, both inheritors of Judson's tradition.



—Joan Acocella



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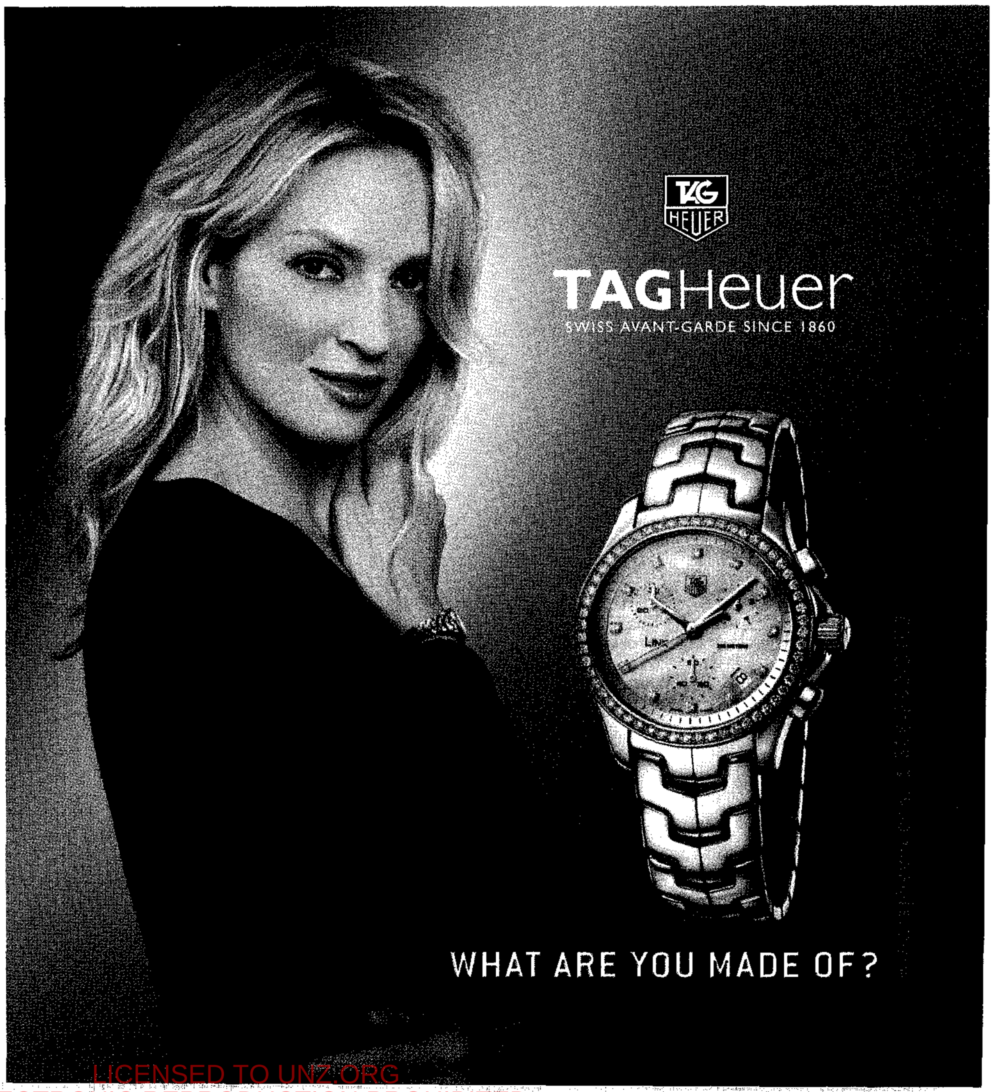


member of the neo-Americana group Green on Red. Since then the underappreciated guitarist with the scruffy voice has turned out several albums of boundaryless roots rock. His latest is called "Soap and Water."

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Nov. 10: The songwriter and guitarist **Paul Curreri** writes intoxicating songs that are reminiscent of the letters no one sends anymore—they are littered with fine-grained detail and feeling. Curreri will perform material from his latest album, "The Velvet Rut." With his wife, the singer **Devon Sproule.**

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 13: After years of bitter acrimony, near-misses, and false starts, the storied hard-rock institution **Van Halen** has reunited, albeit without the original bassist, Michael Anthony (who has been replaced by Eddie Van Halen's teen-age son, Wolfgang).

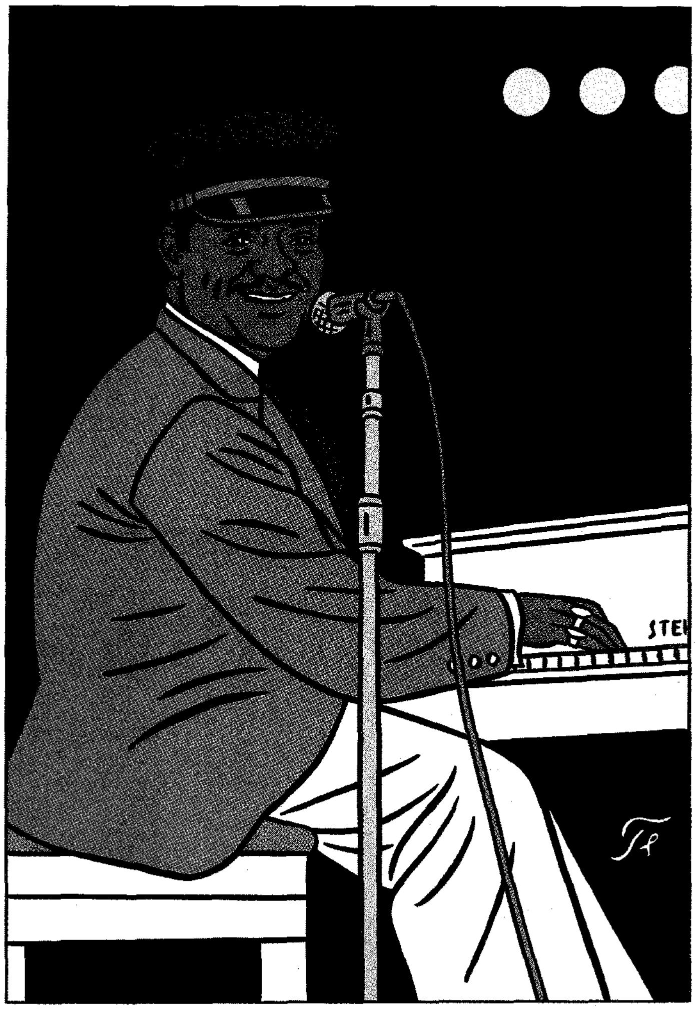
PINK ELEPHANT
530 W. 28th St. (212-463-0000)—Nov. 8: In the fifties, **Fats Domino** took the boogie-woogie piano and R. & B. sounds of his native New Orleans and became one of the preëminent architects of rock and roll with "Blueberry Hill," "I'm Walkin'," "Ain't That a Shame," and other hallowed hymns. Back in New York City for the first time in more than two decades, and for the first time since his near-death experience following Hurricane Katrina, Domino will be honored by **Ivan Neville, Toots Hibberts, Leo Nocentelli,** and a number of other musicians. The show, which will include an appearance by Domino, is in the vast space that used to be Crobar, adjoining this intimate West Side boîte.

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—The South African reggae singer Lucky Dube was known for a highly charged repertoire that had a light side (he revised such pop ballads as Foreigner's "I Want to Know What Love Is"). Dube was murdered last month in front of his two children in suburban Johannesburg, the apparent victim of a carjacking, and on Nov. 8, the reggae vocalist **Sister Carol** and others pay tribute to him.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 6-11: The annual **Django Reinhardt Festival,** which is in its eighth year, unites European acolytes of the legendary Gypsy guitarist and sympathetic jazz musicians. The guitarist **Dorado Schmitt,** the violinist **Florin Niculescu,** and the accordionist **Ludovic Beier** will be joined by special guests each night. Notable participants include the saxophonists **Houston Person** (Nov. 6) and **Joel Frahm** (Nov. 8 and Nov. 11) and the vocalist **Roberta Gambarini** (Nov. 9). Reinhardt's guitar-toting grandson **David** will also be on hand.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 6-11: The **Count Basie Orchestra.** The Count himself and the star soloists and arrangers who brought the band fame are a distant memory, but as long as the ensemble keeps its brass sharp and the rhythm airborne—which it should under the direction of **Bill Hughes,** a Basie-band trombonist since the early fifties—the legacy of Kansas City swing will be intact.



Fats Domino brings his vintage-rock sound to Pink Elephant.

FLOCH

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Dec. 31: The singer **Steve Tyrell** hits town to turn on the holiday charm.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Nov. 6-11: **Kenny Barron,** the dean of New York pianists, fronts a quintet with the newcomers **Dayna Stephens,** on tenor saxophone, and **Michael Rodriguez,** on trumpet.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 7: The keyboardist **Michael Wolff,** leader of the multicultural Impure Thoughts quintet, scales down to a trio setting with the bassist **Chip Jackson** and the drummer **Victor Jones.** Nov. 8-11: The saxophonist **Javon Jackson** and the pianist **Benny Green,** two former members of the last edition of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, join forces to lead a quintet that includes another Messenger, the trumpeter **Wallace Roney,** and the drummer **Al Foster.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Nov. 9-10, in the Allen Room: The singers **Carla Cook** and **Allan Harris,** supported by the pianist **Eric Reed** and his crack trio, pay tribute to the late Eddie Jefferson, the bop-era master of vocalese, which mates original lyrics with jazz improvisations.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 8-11: Don't expect age to have mellowed the acerbically brilliant pianist and composer **Mose Allison,** who will be celebrating his eightieth birthday throughout this engagement.

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
120 Claremont Ave., at W. 122nd St. (917-493-4428)—Nov. 9: The pianist **Ted Rosenthal** premières a new piece, "Theme, Moods and Angles," accompanied by the school's Chamber Jazz Ensemble.

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—Nov. 9: There are certainly flashier young pianists than **Frank Kimbrough,** but few have his poise and historical sweep. This solo performance will spotlight work from his upcoming release "Air" with pieces by Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, and Paul Motian, a frequent Kimbrough associate.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 6-11: **Greg Osby.** Now as noted for his ability to nurture young talent as for his inventive talents on saxophone, Osby has, in the past three decades, finessed the transition from edgy musical rebel to respected patriarch-to-be. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"The Age of Rembrandt"** arrays all two hundred and twenty-eight of the Met's circa-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings according to the dates they were acquired. The dubious idea pays off, as odd juxtapositions of stupendous Rembrandts and Vermeers with radiant lesser masters (and intriguing faux Rembrandts) jolt the pictures to fresh attention. Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ **"Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary."** Through March 2, 2008. ♦ **"The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece."** Through Jan. 13, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Martin Puryear."** Through Jan. 14, 2008. ♦ **"Georges Seurat: The Drawings."** Through Jan. 7, 2008. ♦ **"New Photography 2007: Tanyth Berkeley, Scott McFarland, Berni Searle."** Like the Whitney Biennial, MOMA's annual showcase of emerging photographers is hard to love, and even harder in recent years, when a slew of worthy international contenders has been reduced to merely three. Of the current trio, both Searle and McFarland require detailed explication, and only McFarland rewards it, with a group of digitally collaged landscapes that interweave nature and artifice. But Berkeley needs no explanation; her portraits of friends and strangers, the best of which are five nearly life-size figures, deal with familiar issues of gender, identity, and desire from a genuinely original viewpoint. Through Jan. 1, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Richard Prince: Spiritual America."** Through Jan. 8, 2008. ♦ **"Foto: Modernity in Central Europe."** Through Jan. 13, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. ♦ **"Piotr Uklanski: Summer Love."** This ninety-three-minute Western was shot

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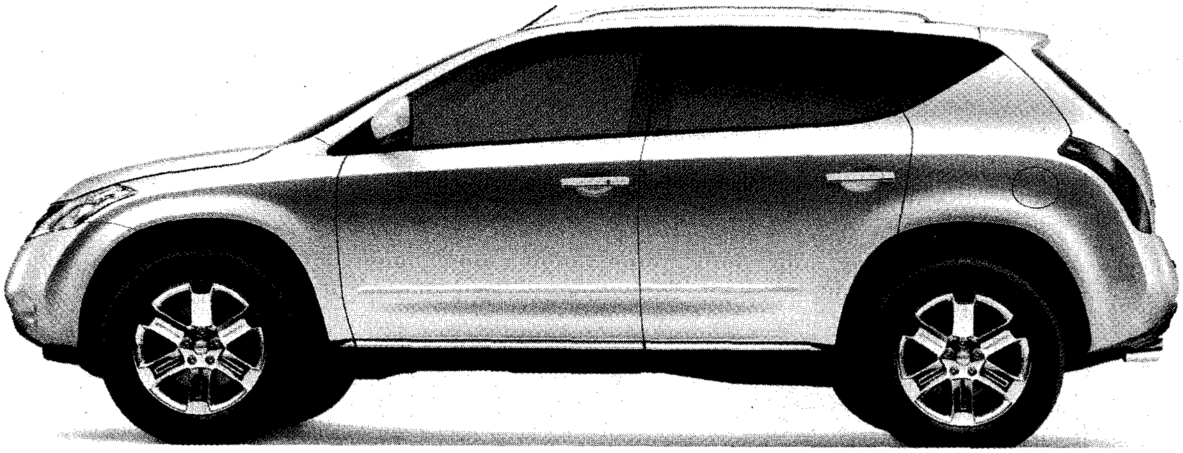

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on a dusty Polish location that passes for Nowheresville, U.S.A. The characters—the Stranger, the Sheriff, the Woman—are bluntly emblematic, the sets and dialogue pared down. The plot involves a posse, a reward, and an awful lot of blood: the usual, but with consideration of the genre's visual clichés. It would be easy to read this tale of Old West justice and ineptitude as a political allegory, but Uklanski gets at much more. Observe the lovesick, alcoholic Sheriff turn to art-making—drawing in blood, urine, vodka, and dirt. Mortality nips at his heels, degradation has already sunk its teeth in, and here he is, etching his longing in dust. Through Dec. 9. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. ♦ **"Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection."** Through Jan. 27, 2008. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)— **"Mythic Creatures: Dragons, Unicorns, and Mermaids."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. ♦ For the next eight months, around five hundred specimens will flit through the Butterfly Conservatory, a pocket-size hothouse planted with orchids and other rain-forest flora. Through May 26, 2008. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"From The New Yorker to Shrek: The Art of William Steig."** Through March 16, 2008. ♦ **"Camille Pissarro: Impressions of City and Country."** Through Feb. 3, 2008. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Painted with Words: Vincent van Gogh's Letters to Émile Bernard."** Through Jan. 6, 2008. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ROGER MAYNE
One of the greatest living British photographers, Mayne is best known for his pictures of working-class children playing and hanging about on London's gritty Southam Street, made between 1956 and 1961. A number of those images are here, and, like Helen Levitt's street work, they're bracingly unsentimental but utterly engaged. Instead of isolating this signature work, the show provides a broader context for it with other vintage photos of his made in London, as well as in Leeds, Wapping, and the Costa del Sol in roughly the same period. Whether Mayne's subject is a bustling Soho fair or trash burning on an empty street, you are always vividly there. Through Nov. 30. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

Short List

PHILIP GUSTON/JASPER JOHNS: Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470. Through Dec. 22. **JAMES ROSENQUIST:** Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 212-734-6300. Through Dec. 14. **CHRISTOPHER WOOL:** Skarstedt, 20 E. 79th St. 212-737-2060. Opens Nov. 9.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

UTA BARTH
Barth's multipanel photographs of sunlight and shadows on the walls of her Los Angeles home take note of details (bookshelves, sofa cushions, a wall clock), but none of them arrest the works' slow dissolve into abstraction. Sensuous, meditative, and offhandedly sublime, these pictures are about the experience of light as it intensifies, fades, and then burns into a fleeting retinal memory. In one triptych, dusk leaves only the faintest impression of windows on a wall that's turning from white to the palest gray, as if a fog were rolling in. Barth is happy to let the ephemeral slip from her grasp. Through Nov. 24. (Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144.)

DAPHNE FITZPATRICK
Fitzpatrick's work ricochets from one jokey sculptural tableau to another: fake sausages (handmade by the artist) penetrate a steel counter and drop to the floor; plastic grapes perch in a hole cut from the wall; an oak shelf supports a trio of cast-wax candlesticks. The show is purposefully eclectic, with rough-hewn messiness sharing floor space with finely honed craft; Fitzpatrick is so rigorous about keeping her viewers guessing that you may wonder if you're missing something—a pun, a reference, an inside joke. Worse is the sense that, if all were explained, you might still feel left in the dark. Through Nov. 10. (Bellwether, 134 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-929-5959.)

MARK FOX
Giddily elaborate painted-and-cut-paper constructions gang together little figures, abstract marks, and lots and lots of words. A mad doodler, Fox draws with ink, watercolor, pencil, pen, crayon, gouache, and marker, then sutures his cutouts with

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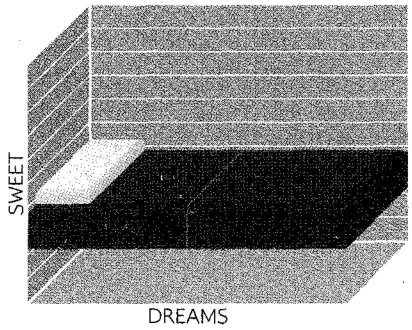

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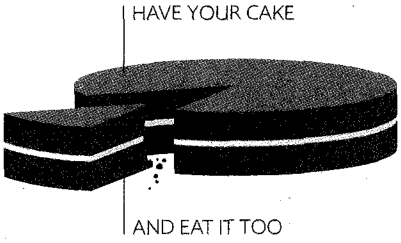

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Club Kitchen is currently rolling out across the fleet.

linen tape, sometimes facing them toward a Mylar-covered wall so that their texts can only be read in reverse. These verbal snippets, collected from conversations, news stories, and the like, tend toward apocalyptic mythos with a side helping of Pop—both "Charlie the Tuna" and Kant are invoked. Through Nov. 10. (Goldston, 530 W. 25th St. 212-206-7887.)

MAIRA KALMAN

The artist, whose work often graces the covers of this magazine, shows the original gouaches from "The Principles of Uncertainty," a yearlong visual blog for the New York *Times*, recently published in book form. Wrapping around the walls like a comic-book frieze, the gouaches are part travelogue, part culinary journal, part diary, with wry philosophical overtones. Images of Louise Bourgeois's sink, Wittgenstein's radiator, and Proust's notebook are joined by renditions of a British fruit platter, a "sad breakfast," and an ambiguous French entrée, "Aspic de Homard ou Langouste." Through Nov. 24. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

HIRSCH PERLMAN

Apocalypse now? Perlman's eccentric show of photographs and silk screens opens with a room of grainy black-and-white photos that look like shots from atomic test sites: twenty mushroom clouds rise and burst in the darkness. Like the much larger color image of what might be a jellyfish from outer space, these explosions are in fact plastic bags filled with Christmas lights, but the tone is set. Following that intro, even serene, sunny images of eroded sand castles recall "On the Beach." Perlman, who photographed himself on an L.A. rooftop at night along with the glowing sculpture of a rocket, imagines life during wartime as both tragedy and farce. Through Nov. 24. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

Short List

THOMAS DEMAND: 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Through Dec. 22. **PAULA SCHER:** Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549. Opens Nov. 8. **PAT STEIR:** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Opens Nov. 9. **"PAINTINGS & SCULPTURES BY NEW YORKER CARTOONISTS":** Phoenix, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 212-226-8711. Through Nov. 24.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

PAUL MCDONOUGH

A new photography gallery opens in Tribeca with one of the season's most rewarding shows. Although the series was his first as a photographer, the black-and-white pictures McDonough made of New Yorkers between 1968 and 1972 merit comparison to the street work of Garry Winogrand, Harry Callahan, or Diane Arbus. Whether shooting up close or from middle ground, he always seems in synch with the city's jagged rhythm, and his results feel loose and instinctive—full of exciting, serendipitous connections. Every expression, every gesture counts, and there's never a dull moment in McDonough's Manhattan. Through Nov. 10. (Wolf, 10 Leonard St. 212-925-0025.)

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Imagine the Post-Impressionists transplanted to the future, and high on hallucinogens. Williams uses Pointillism, acid-electric colors, distorted perspectives, and visionary subject matter. In lieu of portraits of Breton peasant women or views of the artist's bedroom, Williams offers a tiny bearded face emerging from a stick of deodorant, and an anthropomorphic Heineken bottle writhing on a tropical deck. There's another crucial distinction between Williams and the Post-Impressionists: there's little anxiety here. The world, shown through his paintbrush, is just happily and wildly weird. Through Nov. 18. (Canada, 55 Chrystie St. 212-925-4631.)

Short List

EILEEN QUINLAN: Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774. Through Dec. 9. **AIDA RUILOVA:** Salon 94, at 1 Freeman's Alley. 646-672-9212. Opens Nov. 7. **ALAN SARET:** Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 212-219-2166. Opens Nov. 9.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

DAWN CLEMENTS

Elaborate still-lifes of the artist's possessions are spliced together with scenes and lines borrowed from classic films. Fancy shoes, junk on a kitchen table, and swatches of floral fabric commingle with interiors borrowed from "Titanic" and "The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum" (among other films) and portraits of women sporting dramatically upswept hairstyles, all rendered in a delicate and consummately confident hand. Through Nov. 12 (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)

MARTÍN SASTRE

"The war for fiction control lasted for centuries," intones a voice straight out of a blockbuster movie trailer. It is the year 2876 in Sastre's animated video, and the United States has been replaced by a South American confederation–cum–interactive game called Bolivia 3. Tinkerbell, Tom Cruise, and two kinds of Barney—the children's purple dinosaur and the blue-chip artist celebrated for his "Cremaster" films—appear as kooky psychopomps, guiding the plucky young Sastre (in car-

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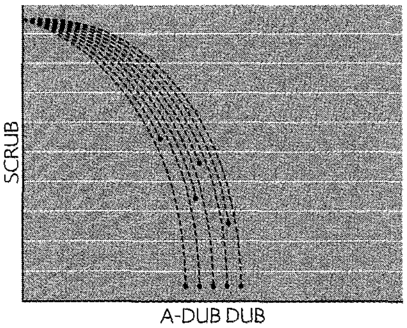

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GOING BANANAS

DANIELLE SIEGELBAUM

The Japanese, taking their cue from American hardcore bands like Bad Brains and Adolescents, developed an extreme blend of fast and loud rock in the late eighties. The first bands to bring this style to America were Boredoms and Ruins; Tokyo's Melt-Banana was part of the second wave. Though the genre is rooted in hardcore, the resulting music sounds little like traditional punk and is sometimes simply called "noise rock," a term so general as to mean almost nothing. Most other bands in this group have moved on, but Melt-Banana has stuck to its very jittery guns. Though its latest release, "Bambi's Dilemma," is slightly more mature than its previous albums, the central moment in a Melt-Banana song is still the pivot that sends a song rattling into the next disconnected section. The songs do anything but settle in—they scream, hiss, shriek, burp, and skip from idea to idea. I don't play their CDs as often as I used to, but I have never been disappointed by a live Melt-Banana show, and don't imagine I will be by its next one, which is Nov. 11 at Europa, in Brooklyn.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

toon and live-action forms) to his heroic apotheosis. It may all be silly, but it's awfully amusing, too. Through Nov. 12. (Momenta Art, 359 Bedford Ave. 718-218-8058.)

DANCE

"CAST NO SHADOW"
The British filmmaker Isaac Julien and the choreographer Russell Maliphant pit live dance against Julien's visually rich films. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Nov. 6 and Nov. 8-10 at 7:30.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
The Jamaican dance king of Rochester, New York, returns to the Joyce. "Edge/Joy," this season's première, plays at the margins of the stage. Last year's "Senku," which juxtaposes youth and experience, stillness and speed, alternates with the powerful "Life: Dark/Light" in two programs that also include the oddly tender duet from "Griot New York" and the signature piece "Prelude: Discipline Is Freedom." (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 6-7 at 7:30, Nov. 8-9 at 8, Nov. 10 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 11 at 2 and 7:30.)

"BORROWED LIGHT"
The Finnish choreographer Tero Saarinen's striking evocation of Shaker culture takes its title from the practice of building windows into interior walls, but his borrowing loses no intensity in the refractions of his choreography. Like the hymns sung live by the Boston Camerata, the dance is both stark and robust, handling that certain spiritual slant with stomping vigor. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 7 at 7 and Nov. 8-10 at 7:30.)

JEROME BEL
In 2005, the French choreographer, a notorious riot-causing provocateur, made his American début with "The Show Must Go On," which turned out to be not only quite conventional in its subversion of theatrical conventions but also sweetly silly. "Pichet Klunchun and Myself," a show-and-tell, getting-to-know-you conversation between Bel and a master of Thai classical dance, is more plain and equally good-natured. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 7-10 at 7:30.)

MARIA HASSABI
"Gloria" takes the form of overlapping solos for Hassabi, Hristoula Harakas, and David Adamo. Framed by a blinking marquee, they strike poses, in an elegant sequence of still frames that sometimes speeds up or gets stuck on repeat. The constant sound of traffic, which music fades in and out of like a weak radio signal, gives the poses a wistful inflection. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Nov. 7-8 and Nov. 10 at 8 and Nov. 9 at 8 and 10.)

MARÍA PAGÉS
The Spanish flamenco innovator is a maverick, and also a marvellous performer, with a touch of madness in her approach. At the Baryshnikov Arts Center, Pagés performs "Self-Portrait," a suite of solos that reflect her very personal exploration of the flamenco form. (450 W. 37th St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 7-10 at 8:30 and Nov. 11 at 3.)

DOUGLAS DUNN & DANCERS
The experiments of the nineteen-seventies return as history in a program of revivals. Sections from "Time Out," a solo that was at once theatrical (costumes, a curtain, a gun) and anti-theatrical (pedestrian movements mathematically manipulated), are collaged together with the ultra-minimal "Four for Nothing" and "One Thing Leads to Another," while "Coquina" stands alone. A concurrent gallery installation displays costumes and video by Charles Atlas, and on Sunday at 1:30 Dunn, Atlas, and the dance critic Deborah Jowitt reminisce. (Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. Nov. 8-10 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 3.)

MONICA BILL BARNES
Empathy, dominance, and despondency are some of the themes in Barnes's evening-length two-woman show "Suddenly Summer Somewhere." Barnes and her collaborator, Anna Bass, in their frumpy housecoats, trace a life together, their fraught interactions punctuated by the brutally nonchalant voices of the Rat Pack. As Bobby Darin croons, "You're nobody till somebody loves you." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 8-10 at 8:30.)

"TAPEIRE"
The Irish step dancer James Devine, the Guinness record holder for taps per second (thirty-eight), found fame in Michael Flatley's "Lord of the Dance"; his show is aurally focussed, virtuosic but anti-spectacular. The aesthetic is backward baseball cap with a kilt, and, unlike in Flatley's productions, the taps are all live. Video segments give historical context to trading sessions between Devine, the fiddler Ashley MacIsaac, the harpist Phamie Gow, and the percussionist Paul Jennings. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. Nov. 9 at 7, Nov. 10 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 11 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 25.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"
At the Guggenheim Nov. 9-11 at 7:30, the icon of American modern dance Paul Taylor discusses his career with his biographer, Suzanne Carbonneau, while dancers from his company present excerpts of his works dating from 1971 to earlier this year. Nov. 12 at 5 and 7:30, Ohad Naharin and his troupe, Batsheva Dance Company, explore the elements of his idiosyncratic movement style, which he calls "gaga." Shows tend to sell out; a standby line forms at 6:30 P.M. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587.)

ELLEN FISHER
For her latest project, the avant-garde veteran asked twelve artists to each contribute one fifteen-minute segment of music. Meredith Monk offered a track from her upcoming CD; others chose Johnny Cash or Patti Smith. Fisher has been a student of Sri Lankan dance rituals for more than three decades, and for this performance she brings in puppets, shadow projections, and footage of a demolition derby. (Roulette, 20 Greene St. 212-219-8242. Nov. 10 at 3.)

"BOCCA TANGO"
Julio Bocca, who retired from ballet last year and leaves the stage for good in December, brings his company Ballet Argentino to the Whitman Theatre for an elegant show. The company eschews tango clichés, and the spirit is sophisticated and lyrical, words that might describe Bocca himself. (Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. Nov. 11 at 2.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
In her most recent Met performances in the title role of **"La Traviata,"** Renée Fleming created a warmly sympathetic character supported by vocalism that was relatively free of the stylistic idiosyncrasies that have slipped into her singing in recent years. She returns, supported by a solid in-house cast that features Matthew Polenzani and Dwayne Croft; the reliable Marco Armiliato is in the pit. (Nov. 7 and Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ The final performance this season of the Met's grand staging of **"Aida,"** with Angela M. Brown, Luciana D'Intino, Franco Farina, Mark Delavan, and Vitalij Kowaljow; Kazushi Ono. (Nov. 8 at 8.) ♦ Julie Taymor's production of **"Die Zauberflöte,"** with Diana Damrau, Anna-Kristiina Kaappola, Eric Cutler, and Stéphane Degout; Kirill Petrenko. (Nov. 9 at 8.) ♦ With Joseph Kaiser replacing Cutler in the role of Tamino. (Nov. 13 at 8.) ♦ The house's enduring production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro"** will be beefed up by the arrival of two superlative singers: Bryn Terfel (Figaro) and Simon Keenlyside (Count Almaviva). Also featuring the estimable Anja Harteros and Ekaterina Siurina; Philippe Jordan, an elegant young Mozartean, leads the orchestra. (Nov. 10 at 1:30.) ♦ The Met's **"Norma,"** designed originally as a vehicle for Jane Eaglen, is saddled with a lumbering production, but that will hardly deter the bel-canto enthusiasts who flock to Bellini's best-known opera. The impressive Armenian soprano Hasmik Papian now takes the title role, countered by the formidable Dolora Zajick as Adalgisa. Also with Franco Farina and Vitalij Kowaljow;

Maurizio Benini. (Nov. 12 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
City Opera's powder-pink production of Massenet's **"Cendrillon"** tells a deliciously tart version of the Cinderella story, set in an exaggerated 1953 (according to the pinup calendar in Prince Charming's rec room). Maids flit about the oversized kitchen and its monstrous appliances in poodle skirts, sniping about Cinderella's stepmother (Joyce Castle) and her delightfully gauche daughters; Cinderella (sweetly sung by Cassandre Berthon) and her beau run off to a drive-in. The pair responsible for this confection are the director Renaud Doucet and the designer André Barbe. With Frédéric Antoun and Eugene Brancoveanu; the conductor, George Manahan, savors the score's richness. (Nov. 7 and Nov. 13 at 7:30 and Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ The fiery Beth Clayton takes the title role in **"Carmen,"** heading a cast that also features Julianne Borg, Scott Piper, and Michael Chioldi; Brian Garman. (Nov. 9 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 1:30.) ♦ Fifty years after its première at the Metropolitan Opera, Samuel Barber's romantic **"Vanessa"** returns to Lincoln Center; Lauren Flanigan, the kind of singer who welcomes a challenge, takes the title role. Also with Katharine Goeldner, Ryan MacPherson, and the great Rosalind Elias (a member of the original cast); Anne Manson. (Nov. 8 at 8 and Nov. 10 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

AMATO OPERA
Anthony Amato's feisty company puts on what should be a perfect production for its Lilliputian space—the verismo double bill of **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci."** Supertitles, a recent addition, update the company's Italian hill-town ambience. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 11 at 2:30. Through Nov. 25.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The orchestra makes one of its rare forays into contemporary music by offering the New York premières of "Fanfare" and "Announcement" from Three Pieces for Orchestra, by the young, Chinese-born composer Huang Ruo, a prominent up-and-comer. Xian Zhang conducts it, as well as two muscular works from the standard repertory—Lalo's "Symphonie Espagnole" (with the compelling violinist Vadim Repin) and Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. Nov. 8 at 7:30 and Nov. 9-10 at 8.)

JUILLIARD ORCHESTRA
Dennis Russell Davies conducts the conservatory's leading ensemble in one of its more notable concerts of the year: the U.S. première of Schnittke's Symphony No. 9, completed by Alexander Raskatov. Haydn's lighter Sinfonia Concertante for Oboe, Bassoon, Violin, Cello, and Orchestra completes the program. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 7 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL: "BERLIN IN LIGHTS"
Clive Gillinson, the hall's general director, has arranged a festival in honor of the rejuvenated city, in which classical music is merely the touchstone for a broad schedule of events. Orchestral concerts follow; for full listing, see www.carnegiehall.org. Nov. 8 at 7:30: HK Gruber, the musical provocateur of staid Vienna, leads New York's Zankel Band in a bevy of short, tart works by Weill (including the "Little Threepenny Opera Music") and Eisler (the Suites Nos. 2 and 3 for Orchestra and such rarities as the "Ballade vom Nigger Jim"). (Zankel Hall.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 2: Few musical events this year will be as closely watched as the New York début of Gustavo Dudamel (the music director designate of the Los Angeles Philharmonic), who comes to town with his infectiously energetic—and startlingly proficient—Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela. In the first of two concerts at Stern Auditorium, it performs music by Berlioz, Chopin (the Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, with Emanuel Ax), and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 5 in C Minor). ♦ Nov. 12 at 8: The orchestra returns for Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, with the podium duties split between Dudamel and a distinguished guest—Simon Rattle. (212-247-7800.)

RECITALS

MISHA AND CIPA DICHTER
The dapper husband-and-wife duo come to the Museum of Jewish Heritage to perform works for two pianos by Mozart, Copland ("El Salón México"), and Arensky, preceded by Misha Dichter's solo renditions of music by Brahms, Schumann ("Faschingsschwank aus Wien"), and Liszt ("Funérailles"). (36 Battery Pl. 646-437-4202. Nov. 7 at 7.)

"DUO CONCERTISTI: ITALIAN MUSIC FOR TWO"
The violinist Michelle Makarski, well known for her luminous ECM album "To Be Sung on the Water," teams up with the pianist Massimo Giuseppe Bianchi for a concert of Italian (or just Italianate) duets by Busoni, Stravinsky (the "Divertimento"), and Fiorenzo Carpi (a world première). (Teatro of the Italian Academy, Columbia University, 1161 Amsterdam Ave. 212-854-1623. Nov. 7 at 7.)

WORDLESS MUSIC SERIES
In the first of two concerts this week, Ronen Givony's breakout series devoted to progressive music—classical and otherwise—offers a set from the Icelandic band Múm and the Montreal horn trio Torngat, along with the cellist Jihyun Kim, who performs solo cello works by Ligeti and Bach. (Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Columbus Ave. at 60th St. Nov. 9 at 8. For full listing and ticket information, see www.wordlessmusic.org.)

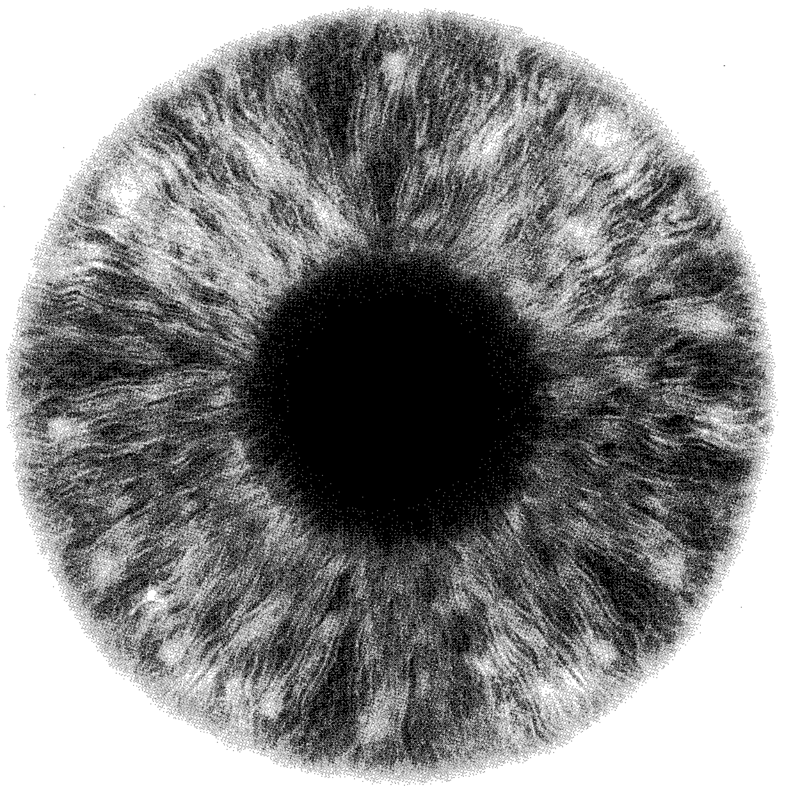
BARGEMUSIC
As part of the barge's "Here and Now" series of concerts of American contemporary music, the plucky Chelsea Symphony performs music by Huang Ruo, David Lang ("Sweet Air"), Libby Larsen, and Jennifer Higdon along with Copland's "Appalachian Spring." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Nov. 9 at 8. For full listing, see www.bargemusic.org.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Two outstanding young pianists offer their only New York recitals of the season. Nov. 10 at 8: Lise de la Salle, the exultant French prodigy, performs music by Mozart and Prokofiev (the Sonata No. 3 in A Minor and Six Pieces from "Romeo and Juliet"). ♦ Nov. 13 at 8: Yevgeny Sudbin, an acclaimed Russian pianist in the grand tradition, offers two sonatas by Haydn and two by a very different composer, Scriabin (including No. 9 in F Major, "Black Mass"), along with works by Medtner and Chopin. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

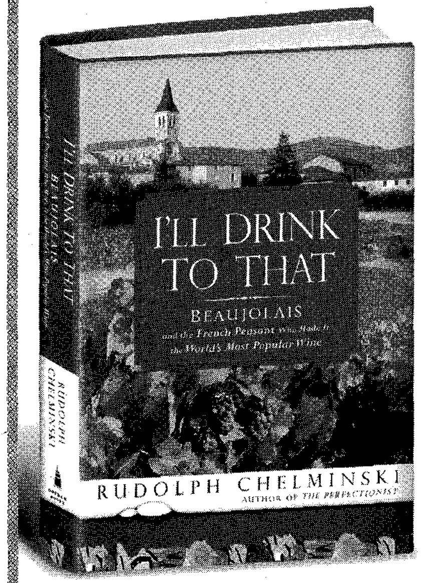
CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The society's musicians focus on a figure whose music seems at once familiar and mysterious: Gabriel Fauré. The program begins with the young composer's dashing Violin Sonata in A Major (featuring the violinist Elmar Oliveira) and songs to texts by Victor Hugo (sung by Paul Groves) before reaching the mature master's Piano Quartet No. 2 in G Minor (featuring Oliveira and the pianist André-Michel Schub). (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-875-5788. Nov. 11 at 5 and Nov. 13 at 7:30.)

KATHLEEN SUPOVÉ: "AIR RIGHTS"
The flamboyant downtown pianist—known to add video, electronic sounds, and vocal ravings to her performances—offers world-première works by Michael Gatonska, Phil Kline, Miya Masaoka, and Missy Mazzoli at the up-to-the-minute Flea Theatre. (41 White St. 212-226-2407. Nov. 11-12 at 7.)

NEW YORK NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE
Some of Gotham's finest contemporary players—along with the soprano Lucy Shelton—look back at the music of some of the big men of late-twentieth-century New York: Feldman, Druckman, Mario Davidovsky, Lukas Foss (his delightful



A LUSH, EARTHY, AND ENTICING TOAST TO BEAUJOLAIS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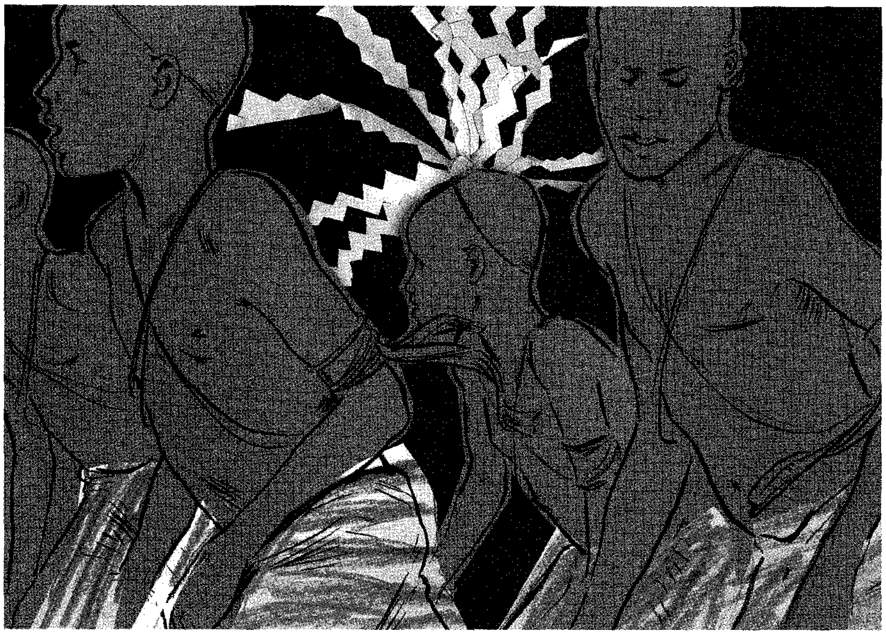
setting of Stevens's “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”), and Elliott Carter (the granitic “Triple Duo”). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 12 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

CHOKING MAN
A drama, directed by Steve Barron, about immigrants who congregate at a Queens diner. Opening Nov. 9. (Cinema Village.)

FRED CLAUS
In this comedy, directed by David Dobkin, Santa's crotchety brother (Vince Vaughn) moves to the North Pole. Co-starring Paul Giamatti, Miranda Richardson, Kevin Spacey, and Kathy Bates. Opening Nov. 9. (In wide release.)



“War/Dance,” a documentary by Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, opens Nov. 9.

SILJA GÖTZ

HOLLY
A drama about an art dealer (Ron Livingston) who attempts to rescue a child sex slave in Cambodia. Directed by Guy Moshe. Opening Nov. 9. (62nd & Broadway.)

LIONS FOR LAMBS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 9. (In wide release.)

MY NAME IS ALBERT AYLER
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Nov. 8. (Anthology Film Archives.)

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 9. (In wide release.)

NOTE FOR NOTE: THE MAKING OF STEINWAY L1037
Ben Niles directed this documentary, about the production of a grand piano. Opening Nov. 9. (Film Forum.)

SAAWARIYA
A musical romance set in India, based on Dostoyevsky's story “White Nights,” about a lonely man who becomes infatuated with a woman he meets by chance. Directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali; starring Ranbir Kapoor. In Hindi and Urdu. Opening Nov. 9. (ImaginAsian.)

STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME
A documentary by Michèle Ohayon about Jack Polak, a Jewish man from Amsterdam who was in a barracks in Auschwitz with his wife and his mistress. Opening Nov. 9. (Quad Cinema.)

WAR/DANCE
A documentary, directed by Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, about children in a Ugandan refugee camp who are invited to participate in a music festival. Opening Nov. 9. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN GANGSTER
Dazzling, swift-moving, shallow. We see the rise of the real-life Harlem gangster Frank Lucas (Denzel Washington), who in 1968 went to Northern Thailand, purchased uncut heroin, shipped it to New York, and sold it on the streets at twice the strength and half the price of what the Mafia was selling. Like many modern gangsters, Frank wants to lead an orderly and loving family life and to keep it untainted by what he does. Opposing Frank is the real-life police detective Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe), who hunts Frank down with a group of irregulars (that is, honest cops) operating out of Essex County, New Jersey. Until the final confrontation of Frank and Richie, the scenes are brief and emblematic, though the director, Ridley Scott, filming in the street or at clubs and parties, packs as much as he can into the corners and backgrounds of shots and decisively shapes even the most casual moments. “American Gangster” has been made with great panache and drive. But the portrait of Frank never goes beyond admiration of his cleverness, his style, and his entrepreneurial skill, and one comes away with such sour questions as “Why is it supposed to be better that hundreds—maybe thousands—of people were destroyed in Harlem by black rather than Italian gangsters?” Written by Steven Zaillian and based on a 2000 *New York* magazine piece by Mark Jacobson. With Ruby Dee, Chiwetel Ejiofor, John Ortiz, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Josh Brolin.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/07.) (In wide release.)

. . . AND GOD CREATED WOMAN
This romantic melodrama, from 1956, made Brigitte Bardot an international star—though, as Juliette Hardy, an underage orphan whose sexual flamboyance scandalizes the women and tantalizes the men of Saint-Tropez, she offers less a performance than an exhibition. The film's tone is set by its first scene, which features her lying prone on a beach towel wearing nothing but sunshine, and throughout, she sashays through her scenes to highlight her pneumatic wherewithal. The spare story concerns Eric (Curt Jurgens), an aging industrialist who offers her money for her favors; Antoine (Christian Marquand), a virile young go-getter who offers her thrills but despises her (and she knows it); and Antoine's brother Mi-

chel (a painfully young Jean-Louis Trintignant), who, to spare her being sent back to the orphanage, offers to marry her. The director, Roger Vadim, was Bardot's husband at the time; their life together had already been marked by turbulence, scandal, and violence, and the scenes in the film that ring true are those of sexual aggression. The film's modernity comes from the clash of frank desire with comically outdated moralism: amazingly, the plot turns on an official's suggestion that Juliette have a doctor certify her virginity. Though Juliette is meant to be a force of nature, Bardot, a pure product, makes her the height of artifice. In French.—*Richard Brody* (French Institute Alliance Française; Nov. 13.)

BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU'RE DEAD

In Sidney Lumet's furious and entertaining little morality play, two men hard up for cash—Andy (Philip Seymour Hoffman), a payroll manager at a Manhattan real-estate company, and his not very bright kid brother, Hank (Ethan Hawke)—decide to knock over their parents' jewelry store in Westchester, and everything goes wrong. The movie, written by Kelly Masterson, has an unusual construction: it reaches a climactic moment, then jumps back a few days to lay out the story from the point of view of one character or another. The fractured time scheme brings out the unsurprising but still enlightening lesson that crime should be left to the professionals, and that greed humbles smart-asses like Andy, who think they're invulnerable. If the material had been underplayed, or done as cool, sly satire, its moral and psychological patterns would have seemed obvious and trite. But the excitable Lumet, now eighty-three, pitches the performances as high as he can, and this feels right. He's made an old man's malicious joke about the universality of folly. With Albert Finney as the boys' frightening dad.—*D.D.* (10/29/07) (In wide release.)

DAN IN REAL LIFE

Steve Carell and Juliette Binoche bring life to this gently comic drama, directed by Peter Hedges ("Pieces of April"). Dan (Carell) is an advice columnist, a widower, and a strict but beleaguered father of three daughters, two of them teen-agers. When he takes them to visit his large extended family at his parents' vacation home, he meets Marie (a wonderfully loose Binoche), who happens to be dating his brother (Dane Cook). Amidst the seemingly endless family activities, Dan falls in love with Marie, his focus interrupted only by a brief stint with a neighbor's feisty, high-achieving daughter (the fantastic Emily Blunt). The impressive cast features topnotch actors—including Dianne Wiest, John Mahoney, Alison Pill, and Norbert Leo Butz—who are limited by their one-dimensional roles, and Hedges offers disappointingly simplistic resolutions for every problem. But for fans of Carell and Binoche, who are paired with some success here, the film may prove a guilty pleasure.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

THE DARJEELING LIMITED

The new Wes Anderson film shows that his fixation on families, and on the ties that bind them, continues unabated. Three brothers, played by Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, and Owen Wilson, meet up on a slow train rattling across India. They are mourning the death of their father, planning a vague pilgrimage to their mother (Anjelica Huston), who has herself moved to Asia, and trying to repair their fellowship. The movie steams with minor resentments and misunderstandings that slowly evaporate in the warm-colored, calmative surroundings of an unfamiliar land. It is easy to be exasperated by the brothers' pettiness, but Anderson is one of the few contemporary directors with the nerve to insist that the blandishments of style—in his case, stately tracking shots, sudden romantic songs, and twitchy running gags—can lend form and grace to even the most discontented lives. With a fine opening cameo from Bill Murray, which leaves you wanting more.—*Anthony Lane* (10/15/07) (In wide release.)

GONE BABY GONE

In his début film as a feature director, Ben Affleck turns to the gloomy streets of working-class Dorchester. A baby girl belonging to the world's worst mother (Amy Ryan) gets snatched, and a local tough kid who has become a private investigator (Casey Affleck), accompanied by his girlfriend (Michelle Monaghan), look for the child in some of the city's most surly locations. The movie turns into a complicated thriller involving the mother's disapproving family and some very emotional Boston policemen who are obsessed with protecting children. At times, the genre conventions (the material comes out of an early Dennis Lehane thriller) are at odds with the movie's authentic, lived-in look, but Affleck, as a director, has no fear of gazing into the abyss, and he gets some very good actors to follow him. With Morgan Freeman and Ed Harris at his feverish best.—*D.D.* (10/29/07) (In wide release.)

JOE STRUMMER: THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN

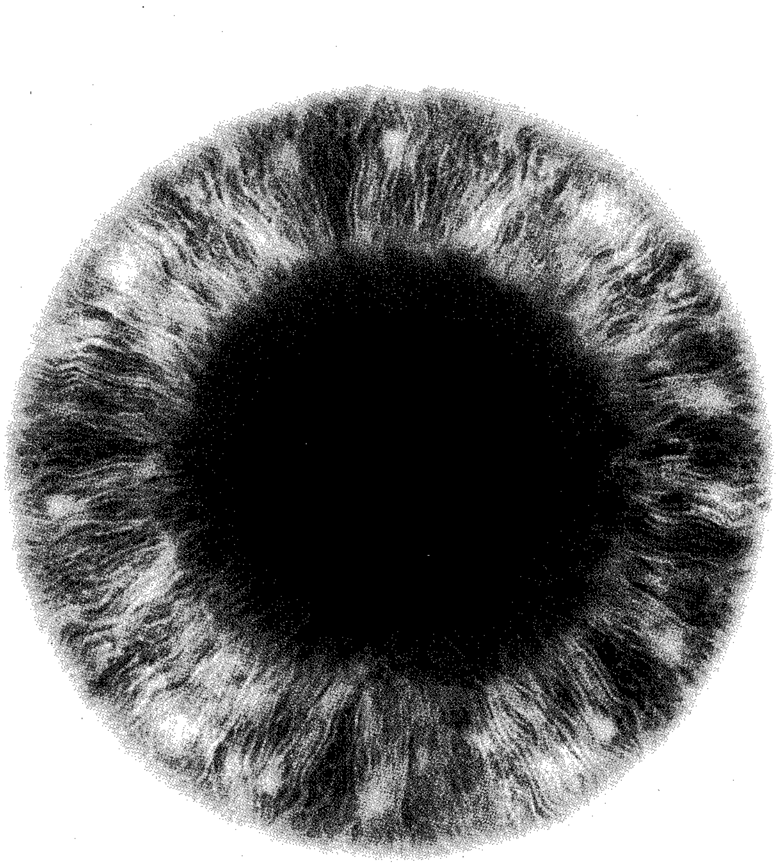
In the late seventies and early eighties, Joe Strummer, one of the leaders of the Clash, wrote and performed some of the most mercurial rock-and-roll songs ever heard. The director Julian Temple, Strummer's friend, brings together home movies, audio recordings, and incendiary performances in a documentary portrait of one of music's true anarchic geniuses. Strummer, who died of a heart ailment in 2002, at the age of fifty, was the son of an English diplomat and travelled extensively throughout his childhood. His exposure to a world of music as well as to the varied influences of his father's work would eventually be showcased in his aggressively committed, politically aware band. The tone of Temple's film is communal; many friends and collaborators reminisce around a bonfire, such as Strummer often relied on to bring friends and family together. And there's a bright, inspiring arc to his story: from Strummer's family's globe-trotting ways to his rebellious early years, through his volatile life with the Clash to his later drift into a solo career, Temple weaves together a film that is both heady and humble, entirely worthy of Strummer's spontaneous, astonishing music.—*Bruce Diones* (IFC Center.)

MARTIAN CHILD

A touching, heartfelt, clever near-miss. The tale of David Gordon (John Cusack), a successful science-fiction writer and grieving widower who adopts Dennis (Bobby Coleman), a brilliant oddball, has enough emotional depth and integrity to make its flaws all the more obvious. The solitary boy insists, disturbingly, that he is from Mars—and has the right sort of quirks to back the claim up. Coleman is the center of the film, and he is extraordinarily credible as a little genius. In his scenes with Cusack, the filial relationship grows plausibly and movingly, thanks to the perceptive eye of the director, Menno Meyjes, and the cinematographer, Robert Yeoman, one of the few who know how to keep a camera still. The screenplay, by Seth Bass and Jonathan Tolins, based on a novel by David Gerrold, offers heartwarming, tear-jerking, stand-up-and-cheer moments that only a golem could resist, but Meyjes never conjures a world, inner or outer, so the result is just a string of effective scenes, an illustrated script rather than an experience. Nonetheless, a charming Martian dance, a memorable placement of M&M's, and several stunning missed connections suggest the heights that this tender drama could have scaled.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

MICHAEL CLAYTON

A gabby, irresistibly entertaining New York thriller. Michael Clayton (George Clooney), a law-firm fixer of dubious ethics, is dispatched to rein in the firm's chief litigator (Tom Wilkinson), a high-strung guy who has discovered a document that incriminates one of the firm's clients and has responded by going off his meds and out of his mind. Michael, it turns out, is only slightly less disgusted by the dirty business than the litigator is, and the movie catches him during a period of four frantic days in which all the strains in his life are pushing him to the breaking point. The screenwriter Tony Gilroy both wrote and directed the movie, and he keeps the tension level high—too high at times; the movie needs to breathe more. Yet the inside-the-law-firm chatter and poker-table badinage come off superbly. Clooney, looking a little haggard, gives a lovely performance as a smart man who has a few too many scruples to be a win-



Newsweek

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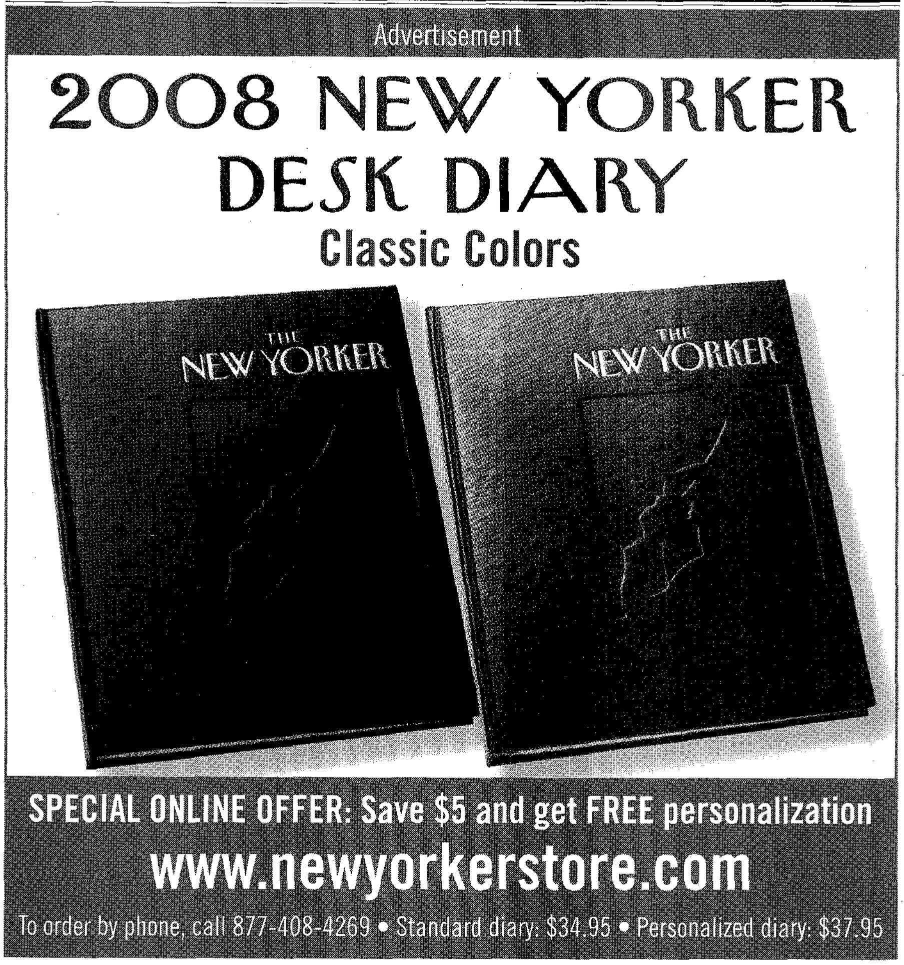

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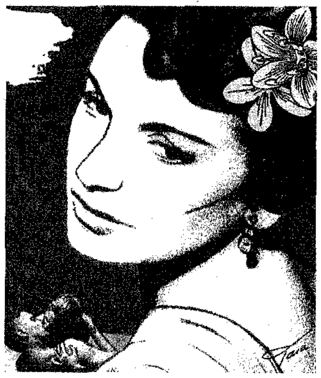


The red-haired Scottish beauty Deborah Kerr, who died on October 16, at the age of eighty-six, started out by portraying nuns and nice English ladies. It is commonly said that she saved her career by playing openly sexual women. This is true, though one hastens to add that, unlike the era's bombshells, Kerr, a consummate actress, displayed many different ways of being sexy. Her breakthrough role, of course, was in "From Here to Eternity," from 1953. A blonde outfitted in a sweater as tight as any worn by Lana Turner, she attracts the implacable interest of the warrior Burt Lancaster, but then, unwilling to be taken for granted, she angrily pulls away. The famous kiss in the surf is memorable because it represents the triumph of desire over bitterness and fear. Four years later, in "An Affair to Remember," she's a worldly woman who flirts with Cary Grant while pretending that she's too sophisticated to do anything as obvious as flirting. Her performance (at least early in the movie) is a bit of ironic high comedy. Deborah Kerr made maturity exciting. There's no one remotely like her today.

—*David Denby*

ner. With Tilda Swinton and Sydney Pollack. Cinematography by Robert Elswit.—*D.D.* (10/8/07) (In wide release.)

MY NAME IS ALBERT AYLER
Kaspar Collin's documentary portrait of the great saxophonist, who died in 1970, evinces a remarkable sympathy with its subject and his art. Born in Cleveland, Ayler first made a name for himself in Stockholm in 1962; Collin, who is Swedish, does terrific legwork to find the musician's former girlfriend and sidemen, including one who recalls how the unheralded outsider dared to compare his importance to Picasso's. The ne plus ultra of free jazz, Ayler performed the musical equivalent of speaking in tongues: he left chord changes and swinging rhythms far behind and emitted great spiritual wails and shrieks from his horn. Collin expertly evokes the revolutionary impact of Ayler's arrival in New York in 1963, when an astonished John Coltrane yielded the bandstand to him. (At Coltrane's request, Ayler played at his funeral, in 1967, and the film includes an archival recording of that harrowing performance.) The stirring presence and fascinating anecdotes of such bandmates as the drummer Sunny Murray, the judicious, evocative use of archival footage of New York in the mid-sixties, and a generous helping of the music itself combine to offer magical moments of a madeleine-like power, summoning up a vanished world that the music both thrived on and exemplified. Though the end of the film seems rushed—its seventy-nine minutes could have gone on for hours—it is nonetheless a cause for rejoicing. In English and Swedish.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives.)

RENDITION
It's interesting enough to hold your attention, but bad enough to make you despair of Hollywood's ability to confront a serious subject. An Egyptian-born chemical engineer (Omar Metwally) who has lived in the United States since he was fourteen and is married to an American (Reese Witherspoon) gets snatched and hooded by the C.I.A. as he returns to America from South Africa. He is rendered to an unspecified North African country for "interrogation"—right after it has suffered a terrorist attack—and a rescue operation gets under way. His wife prevails on her old boyfriend (Peter Sarsgaard), a senator's assistant, to make inquiries in Washington, while a young C.I.A. officer (Jake Gyllenhaal) watches the interrogation, which rapidly turns into torture, and suffers horrible doubts. The director, Gavin Hood, keeps several narrative lines going at once, but the moral and spiritual issues involved in America's use of torture almost get lost in a display of high-powered moviemaking. With good performances by Meryl Streep as the C.I.A.'s head of counter-terrorism and Igal Naor as the head of the secret police in the North African country. Written by Kelly Shane. Shot partly in Morocco.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

VERDUN: VISIONS OF HISTORY
This silent 1928 reënactment by the director Léon Poirier of one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War is less a drama than a chronicle brought to life. Though blandly directed, it's an astonishing production—which is only now making its American première. The film's three sections, or "visions," are labelled Force, Hell, and Destiny. Force shows the evacuation of villages near Verdun and the anticipatory maneuvers of the French and German armies as the latter prepares its assault. Hell is the attack itself, Destiny the French resistance and, ultimately, victory. With just a handful of broadly drawn characters but an amazingly detailed collection of explosions, Poirier shows villages reduced to rubble, farmland burned bare and riddled with tunnels and trenches, and bomb craters strewn with corpses. Yet the effect is strangely detached and impersonal: the action filters out the horrible wounds, the cursing, the filth, and the madness. The overarching theme is the horror of war in one's homeland, and the superhuman resolve needed to prevent it or to win it: the patriotic spectacle of minimized gore seems calculated to gird the French for their next fight, as if Poirier knew that the war to end all wars didn't.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Nov. 11 and Nov. 15.)

TARA HARDY

WE OWN THE NIGHT
The new film by James Gray feels like a companion piece to "The Yards," his earlier, equally dark saga of crime and domestic discord in New York. Both films star Joaquin Phoenix and Mark Wahlberg; in the first film, they played best friends, and this time they're brothers—closer in blood but painfully divided by the course of their lives. Bobby (Phoenix) runs a night club, while Joseph (Wahlberg), following in the stern footsteps of his father (Robert Duvall), is a Brooklyn cop. When Bobby is asked to help entrap a Russian drug lord, he finds himself being pulled away from the good times (this is 1988) and back into his family, to the dismay of his girlfriend, Amada (Eva Mendes). The moral motion of the film is fairly simple—the return and redemption of a prodigal son—but Gray steeps his tale in murky complication, and the staging of every scene, be it downbeat or frantic, is so assured that you barely notice the implausibilities. (Bobby and Joseph, for instance, hardly look like brothers.) The rain-drenched car chase, halfway through, is reason enough to see the film.—*A.L.* (10/22/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BEE MOVIE: In wide release. **DARFUR NOW:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **SAW IV:** In wide release. **30 DAYS OF NIGHT:** In wide release. **WHY DID I GET MARRIED?:** In wide release.

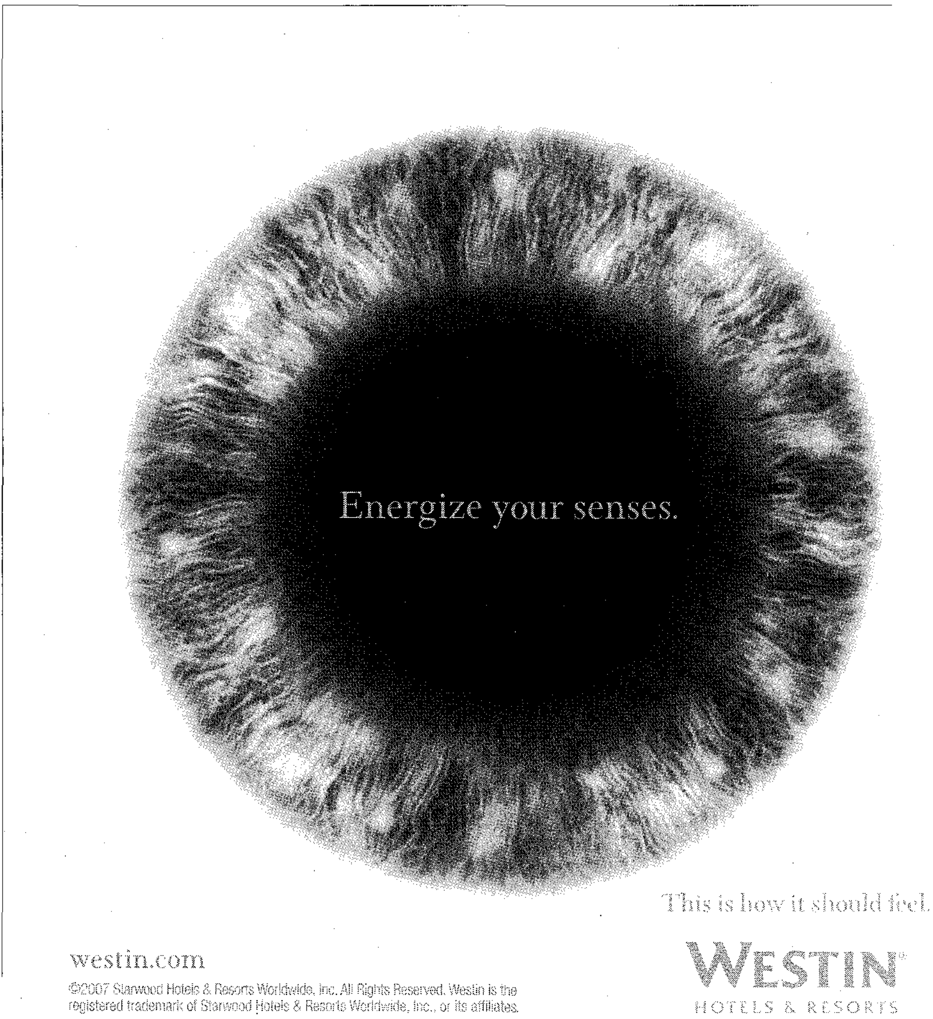
REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Special screenings. ♦ Nov. 7 at 8: Short films by George and Mike Kuchar. ♦ Nov. 8 at 7:30: "Smouldering Fires" (1924, Clarence Brown; silent) and "One Week" (1919, Buster Keaton and Edward F. Cline). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Nov. 10 at 6: "Anticipation of the Night" (1958, Stan Brakhage) and "Short Films 1975 #1-10" (1975, Brakhage). ♦ Nov. 11 at 5:30: "Pittsburgh Trilogy" (1970-71, Brakhage). ♦ Nov. 11 at 8: "The Text of Light" (1974, Brakhage). ♦ "Performa 07." Nov. 12 at 7:30: An evening with Grand Union, a dance group from the seventies, featuring short-film screenings. ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: Short films by Judson Dance Theatre artists.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Marc Recha. All films are in Spanish, Catalan, and French. Nov. 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Heaven Rises" (1991). ♦ Nov. 8 at 6 and 9: "Where Is Madame Catherine?" (2003). ♦ Nov. 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "August Days" (2006). The 6:50 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Nov. 10 at 2, 4:30, and 9:40: "Pau and His Brother" (2001). ♦ Nov. 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Cherry Tree" (1998). ♦ In première. Nov. 10 at 6:50: "Margot at the Wedding" (2007, Noah Baumbach), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ "Jonathan Lethem Selects." Nov. 12 at 7: "Straight Time" (1978, Ulu Grosbard), followed by a Q. & A. with the director and Lethem. ♦ Special screening. Nov. 13 at 7:30: "Pandora's Box" (1928, G. W. Pabst; silent), with live musical accompaniment by 3epkano.

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Nov. 7-20 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Diva" (1981, Jean-Jacques Beineix; in French). ♦ Through Nov. 22: The films of Pietro Germi. All films are in Italian. ♦ Nov. 7 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "Alfredo, Alfredo" (1972). ♦ Nov. 7 at 3 and 7:10: "The Facts of Murder" (1959). ♦ Nov. 8 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "In the Name of the Law" (1949). ♦ Nov. 9-15 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Divorce—Italian Style" (1961).



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FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Beur Is Beautiful: Maghrebi-French Filmmaking," a CinemaEast Film Festival sidebar. For complete program information, visit www.arteeast.org. All films in French and Arabic. Nov. 10 at 2:30: "Tea in the Harem" (1985, Mehdi Charef). ♦ Nov. 10 at 7: "Memories of Immigration" (1997-8, Yamina Benguigui). ♦ "Fashion Icons." Nov. 13 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: ". . . And God Created Woman" (†).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Through Nov. 15: CinemaEast Film Festival. For complete program information, visit www.arteeast.org. Nov. 8 at 7: "The TV Is Coming" (2006, Moncef Dhouib; in Arabic), followed by a Q. & A. with the actress Fatma Ben Saidane. ♦ Nov. 9 at 9:30: "VHS Kahloucha" (2006, Nejib Belkadhi; in Arabic), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Nov. 10 at 3:45 and Nov. 15 at 7: "Rome Rather Than You" (2006, Tariq Teguia; in Arabic). ♦ Nov. 11 at 4:30 and Nov. 15 at 9:30: "Tehran Has No More Pomegranates" (2007, Massoud Bakhshi; in Farsi). The Nov. 11 screening will be followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ In revival. Nov. 9-11 at noon: "Kama Sutra: A Tale of Love" (1996, Mira Nair). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Nov. 9-10: "Inland Empire" (2006, David Lynch). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Nov. 13 at 7:30: "Iron Ladies of Liberia" (2007, Jonathan Stack).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Nov. 7 at 1:30: "L'Avventura" (1960, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian). ♦ Nov. 8 at 1:30: "Black Girl" (1966, Ousmane Sembene; in French) and "Borom Sarret" (1963, Sembene; in French). ♦ Through Nov. 14: "Kino! Berlin." Except where noted, all films are in German. Nov. 7 at 8: "Good Bye, Lenin!" (2003, Wolfgang Becker). ♦ Nov. 8 at 6:15 and Nov. 10 at 8: "Ernst Lubitsch in Berlin—From Schoenhauser Allee to Hollywood" (2006, Robert Fischer; in German and English). ♦ Nov. 8 at 8:30: "Run Lola Run" (1998, Tom Tykwer). ♦ Nov. 9 at 6: "Madonnas" (2007, Maria Speth; in German, French, and English). ♦ Nov. 9 at 8:30 and Nov. 12 at 6: "Berlin—Pictures of a City" (1998, Manfred Wilhelms) and "Hanna Hannah" (2006, Hanna Schygulla). ♦ Nov. 10 at 2: "The Lives of Others" (2006, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck). ♦ Nov. 10 at 5: "A Father's Music" (2006, Igor Heitzmann). ♦ Nov. 11 at 4:30: "Christo and Jeanne-Claude: The Wrapped Reichstag" (1996, Wolfram Hissen and Jörg Daniel Hissen; in English and German). ♦ Nov. 12 at 8:15: "Night Shapes" (1998, Andreas Dresen). ♦ Nov. 12 at 7: An Evening with Michael Sporn. ♦ Special screenings. Nov. 11 at noon and Nov. 15 at 6:30: "Verdun, Visions of History" (†).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—The films of Andy Warhol. Nov. 10 at 2: "Since" (1966) and "Salvador Dali" (1966). ♦ Nov. 10 at 4: "Bike Boy" (1967). ♦ Nov. 10 at 6:30: "A Walk Into the Sea: The Danny Williams Story" (2007, Esther Robinson), introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 10 at 8:30: "Beautiful Darling" (a work in progress, James Rasin), introduced by the director. ♦ Nov. 11 at 2: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1968). ♦ Nov. 11 at 5: "Mrs. Warhol" (1966) and "Sunset" (1967).

OTHER ISRAEL FILM FESTIVAL
Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Ave. at 76th St. (646-505-5708)—Through Nov. 15: A series of films about Arab citizens of Israel. For screening venues and complete program information, visit www.otherisrael.org. Nov. 9 at 7: "Behind the Walls" (1984, Uri Barabash; in Hebrew). ♦ Nov. 10 at 7: "Maktub" (2004, Avi Mussel; in Hebrew). ♦ Nov. 11 at 1: "Since You Left" (2005, Mohammed Bakri; in Arabic).

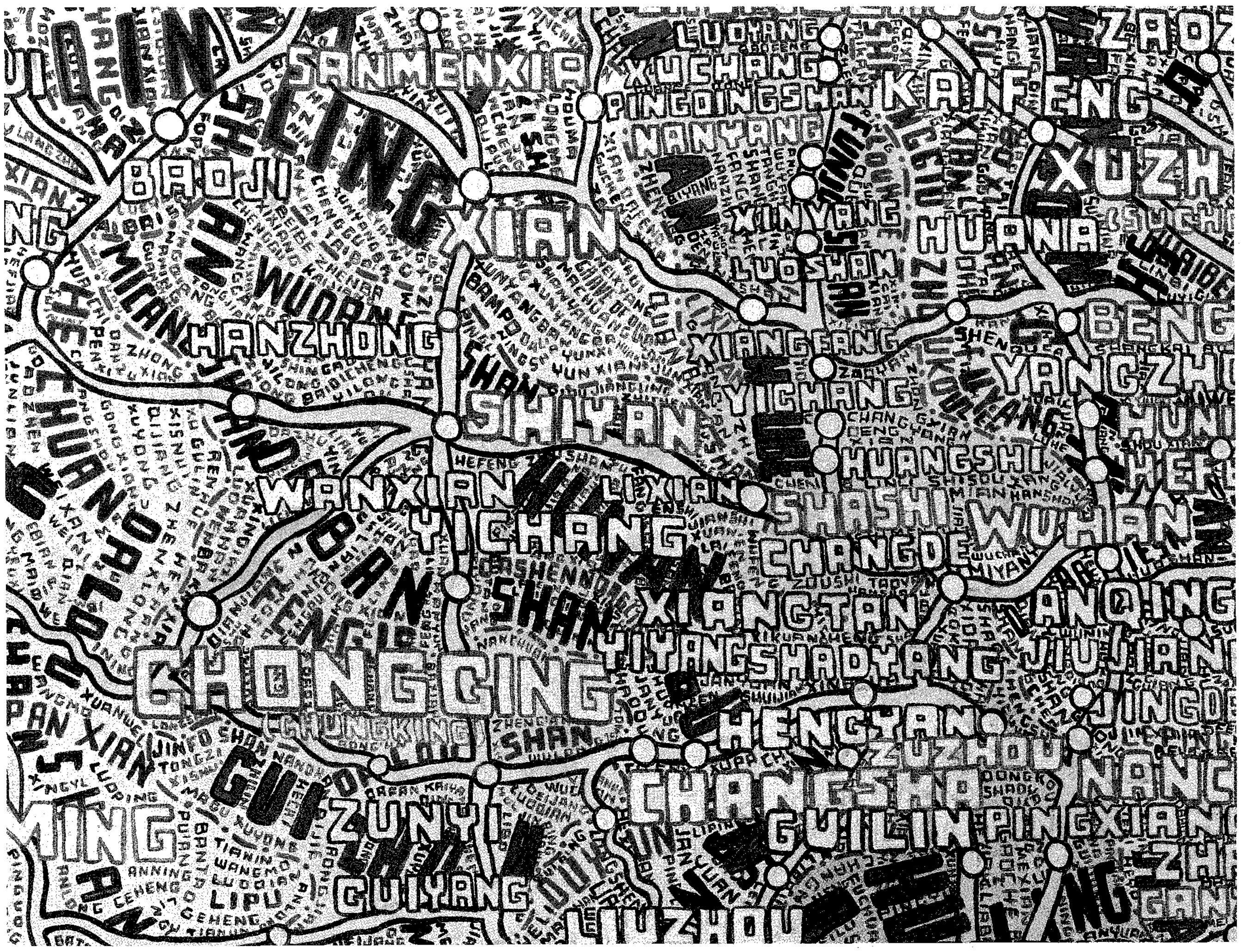
PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. Nov. 7-9 at 7 and Nov. 10-13 at 9: "Glass Lips" (2006, Lech Majewski).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Nov. 9 at 9:30: "The Seventh Seal" (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), introduced by the writer Thomas Cahill.

SCANDINAVIA HOUSE
58 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-847-9779)—Through Dec. 15: "A Celebration of Danish Cinema: Nordisk Film at 100." Nov. 7 at 6:30 and Nov. 10 at 3: "Children of Divorce" (1939, Benjamin Christensen; in Danish).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Nov. 9-10: "New York Stories" (1989, Woody Allen, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Nov. 14: Croatian films. All films are in Serbo-Croatian. Nov. 8 at 1:30 and 8:30: "What Is a Man Without a Moustache?" (2005, Hrvoje Hribar). ♦ Nov. 8 at 3:45 and Nov. 9 at 9:15: "Light Drawings: The Zagreb School of Animation," a short-film program. ♦ Nov. 9 at 1:30 and 7:15: "One Song a Day Takes Mischief Away" (1970, Krešimir Golik). ♦ Nov. 9 at 3:30 and Nov. 11 at 5:45: "Sky, Satellites or Celestial Body" (2001, Lukas Nola). ♦ Nov. 9 at 5:15 and Nov. 10 at 1:15: "Rondo" (1966, Zvonimir Berković). ♦ Nov. 10 at 3:10, Nov. 11 at 2, and Nov. 13 at 1: "Tressette: A Story of an Island" (2006, Dražen Žarković). ♦ Nov. 10 at 4:50: "The Pine Tree in the Mountain" (1971, Antun Vrdoljak). ♦ Nov. 11 at 3:45 and Nov. 13 at 2:45: "Face to



A detail from Paula Scher's painting "China," in her current exhibition at the Maya Stendhal gallery.

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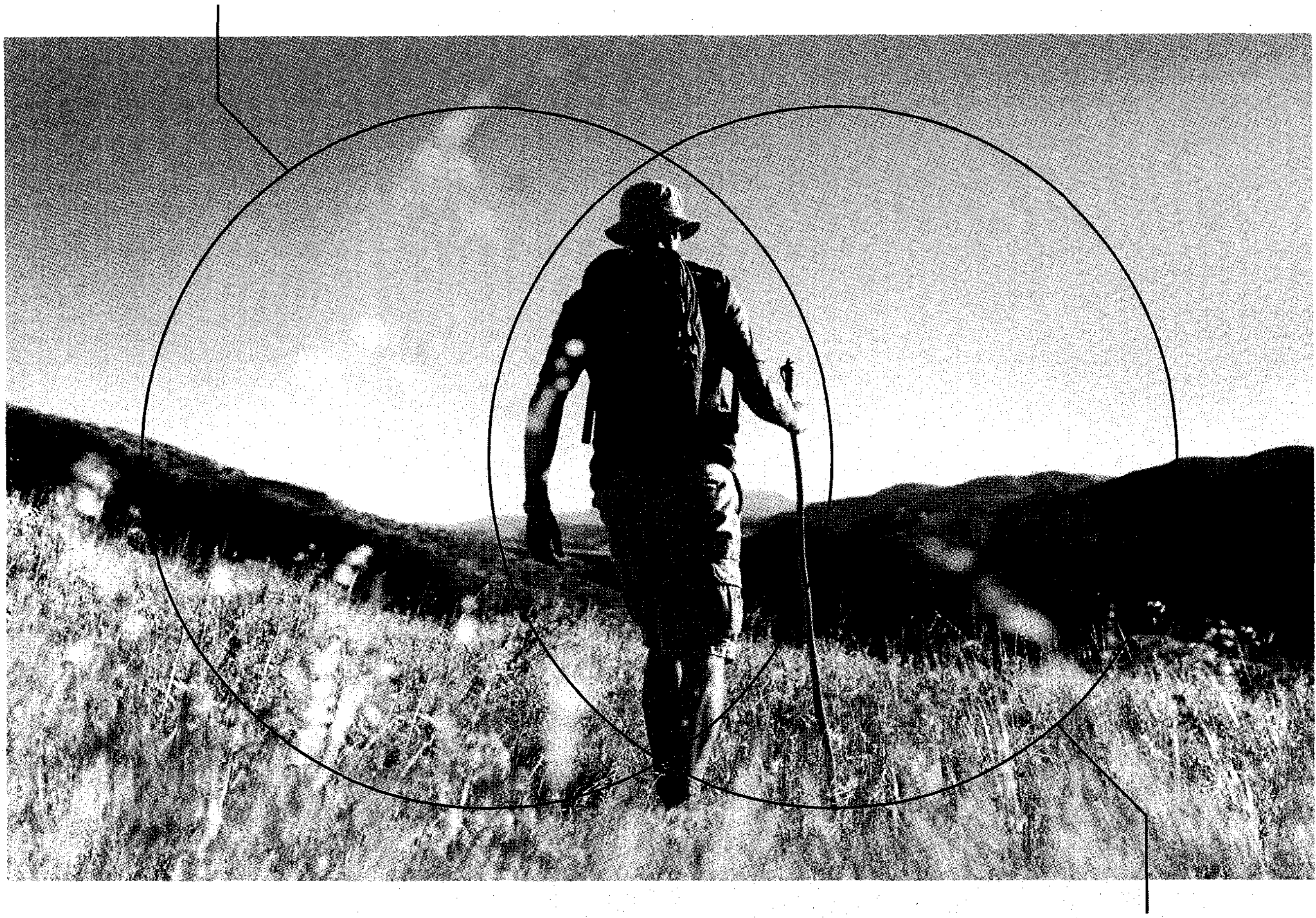

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Face" (1963, Branko Bauer). ♦ Nov. 11 at 7:30: "Occupation in 26 Pictures" (1978, Lordan Zafranović). ♦ Special screenings. Nov. 8 at 6:30: "Attica" (1974, Cinda Firestone). ♦ Nov. 10 at 7: "Días de Santiago" (2006, Josué Méndez; in Spanish).

READINGS AND TALKS

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB

Joshua Furst reads from "The Sabotage Café," his novel about a mother and a daughter and the Minneapolis punk scene of the eighties. He'll be joined by Porochista Khakpour, who will read from her novel, "Sons and other Flammable Objects," and the short-story writers Rebecca Curtis and Luis Jarmillo. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. Nov. 9 at 7.)

"ILLUSTRATION IN THE AGE OF ANXIETY"

Ed Koren, Ed Sorel, Ben Katchor, and other artists discuss working while the nation is at war. (The New School, 55 W. 13th St., 2nd fl. No tickets necessary. Nov. 10 at 3.)

"PENULTIMATE LIT"

The PEN American Center inaugurates a new series of discussions between writers and other artists. It starts with the novelist Jonathan Baumbach and his son Noah, the director of "The Squid and the Whale," among other movies. The writer Amanda Stern is the host. (Southpaw, 125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn. Tickets at the door. Nov. 11 at 7.)

"HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVED"

The publishing wing of *The New York Review of Books* recently released "The New York Stories of Edith Wharton," a collection of twenty tales about life in the city. Roxana Robinson provided the introduction to the book, and on Nov. 12 at 6 she discusses Wharton's work with the critic Hildegard Hoeller. (The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, 108 Orchard St. 212-982-8420.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The I.C.P.'s current shows document the Spanish Civil War and its legacy, with pictures by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and Francesc Torres. On Nov. 12 at 7, it joins with the Poetry Society of America for an evening of verse and prose dating back to the conflict, which attracted the attention of Ernest Hemingway, Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, George Orwell, César Vallejo, and other notables. The writers Mónica de la Torre, Margo Jefferson, Philip Levine, and Scott Spencer will do the reading. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 212-857-0001.)

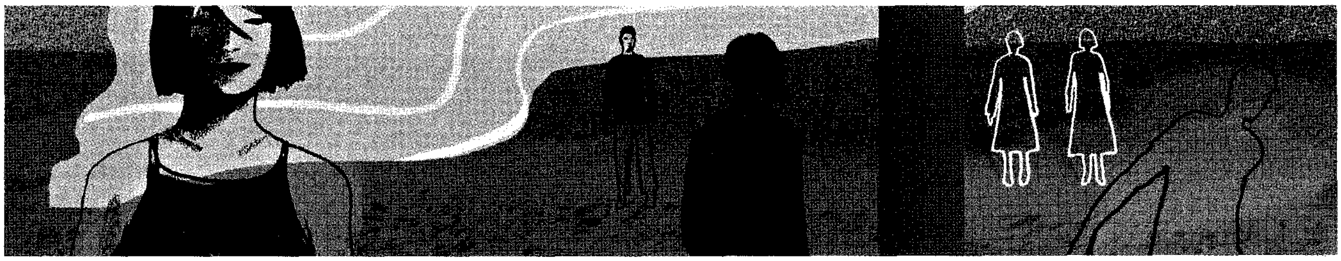
ABOVE AND BEYOND

"REMEMBERING THE FULTON FISH MARKET"

This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the Tin Building, on South Street, which used to house part of the Fulton Fish Market. Two years ago, the market moved from its downtown home, where it had been located since the early nineteenth century, to the Bronx. Naima Rauam, a painter and photographer who kept a studio among the fishmongers for decades, spent a number of years working in the Tin Building, capturing the pre-dawn trade. Starting Nov. 8, she's showing her watercolors, drawings, and photographs at the Space gallery. In conjunction with the show, a series of celebratory events are planned, including performances on Nov. 7 and Nov. 14 of "The Consuming Passions of Lydia Pinkham and Rev. Sylvester Graham: An Original and Not Always Tasteful Turn-of-the-Last-Century Musical Revue About Food." The first weekend, Nov. 10-11, features readings of work by the *New Yorker* writer Joseph Mitchell, a tour of the former market site, and other activities. (207A Front St., at Beekman St. For more information, call 212-964-8465, or visit www.artpm.com. Through Nov. 18.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Amid worries about the international credit market, the major auction houses lay out their Impressionist and modern art treasures for the delectation of the super-rich. Titans dominate at **Sotheby's** evening sale (Nov. 7): Gauguin's "Te Poipoi (The Morning)" explodes with reds, deep greens, and browns, depicting a young Tahitian girl in the intimacy of her morning bath; Van Gogh's "The Fields (Wheat Fields)" captures one of the artist's last, euphoric moments; and Braque's "L'Écho" is a vivid still-life with folded-up newspaper, pitcher, and bird. The auction also features six Picassos, including what is billed as the "finest sculpture by the artist to ever appear at auction," a large bust of Dora Maar. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ Cézanne looms large at **Christie's** evening sale (Nov. 6), which features a group of five watercolors and two paintings, including the emotionally resonant "Portrait de Vallier" (an enigmatic watercolor depicting an almost faceless gardener) and the gorgeous still-life "Compotier et Assiette de Biscuits." The house also offers two rival odalisques: "L'Odalisque, Harmonie Bleue," by Matisse, and "Femme Accroupie au Costume Turc (Jacqueline)," by Picasso. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Against all this expensive grandeur, **Swann** holds an impressive sale of travel posters (Nov. 12) that includes splendid advertisements for the tempting journeys to be found on French ocean liners, German zeppelins, and British railways. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)



The Japanese dance troupe Pappa Tarahumara.

AUDE VAN RYN

ON THE HORIZON

CLASSICAL MUSIC
BACK TO GLUCK

Nov. 27-Dec. 22

Last spring's Metropolitan Opera staging of Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" revealed the power of the once-popular composer's music. Now comes a new production of "Iphigénie en Tauride," featuring Susan Graham and Plácido Domingo. (212-362-6000.)

DANCE
SHIPPING NEWS

Nov. 28-Dec. 1

The Japanese ensemble Pappa Tarahumara's poetic fusion of dance, performance art, and theatre draws from the aesthetic traditions of Noh, Kabuki, and Butoh. For their BAM début, they will perform "Ship in a View," which is choreographed by Hiroshi Koike (the group's artistic director) and was inspired by his home town, Hitachi. (718-636-4100.)

ART
DOUBLE TAKE

Nov. 28-Feb. 25, 2008

The work of the twin brothers Gert and Uwe Tobias, born in Romania in 1973, is the focus of MOMA's "Projects 86." The twins' colorful, oversized woodcuts, sculptures, and drawings incorporate pop culture, Romanian folklore, and Constructivism. (212-708-8400.)

MOVIES
FOUNDING FATHER

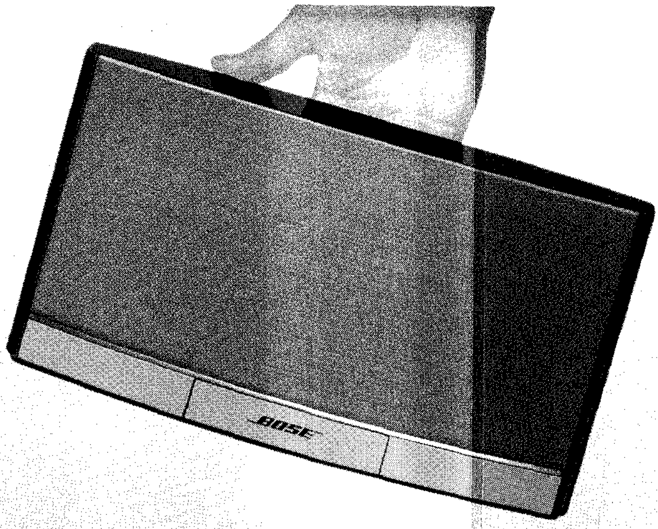
Nov. 30-Dec. 13

The Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene was one of the world's greatest political filmmakers. "Black Girl," from 1965, is widely cited as the first African feature film. "Moolaadé," from 2004, depicts African women who resist female circumcision. Throughout his career, he shrewdly and angrily exposed the hypocrisies of colonialism and religious orthodoxy. Film Forum will present all nine of his full-length films. (212-727-8110.)

NIGHT LIFE
CROSS YOUR FINGERS

Dec. 7

The last time that New York hosted a concert by Sly Stone, Abe Beame was beginning his run as mayor. A lot has changed in the city in the three decades since, but Stone remains a bewitchingly erratic live performer. He'll allegedly be at B. B. King's. (212-997-4144).



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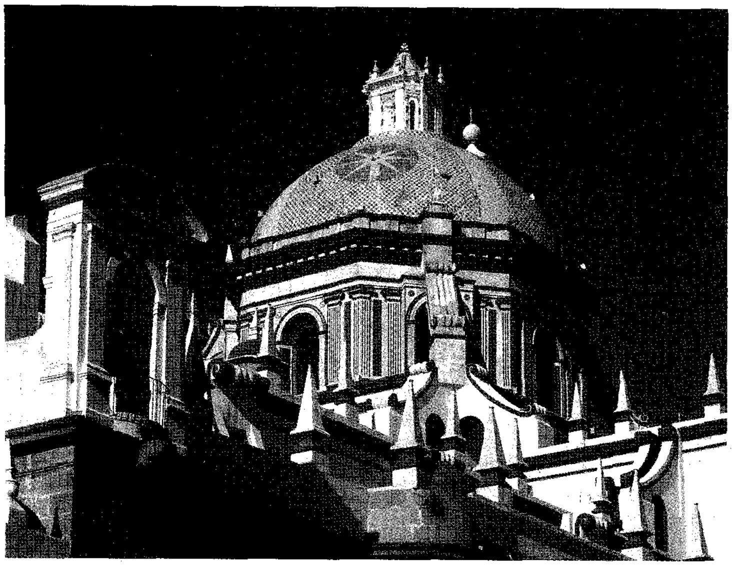

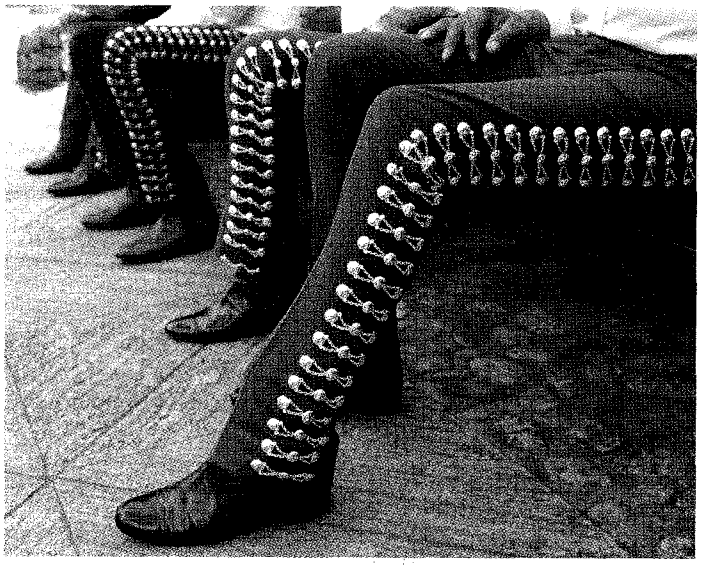

WHERE THE PAST IS PRESENT

With its more than five thousand Spanish Colonial buildings, few places have evoked the past as clearly as Puebla. Mexico's fifth-largest metropolis is dotted with idiosyncratic, sixteenth-century edifices, often adorned with hand-painted tiles. Among the shops and grand buildings of Puebla's *zócalo,* the tree-lined square that serves as the city's social center, is Puebla Cathedral. Consecrated in 1649, Mexico's second-largest church has two bell towers. One tower is open to the public for a commanding view of Puebla. In the distance, visitors can see two distant volcanoes, one snow-capped, the other still active.

Throughout the city and at the traditional markets such as the **Mercado de Artesanías** and **El Parián**, shop for local handicrafts such as *el arbol de la vida* figurines. The tree-shaped objects have leaves, fruit, animals, and human figures wired to their branches. Exquisite, hand-painted Talavera tiles, dinnerware, and ceramics can be purchased at local workshops. The manufacture of pottery in Puebla dates back to before the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. Moctezuma, it's said, would eat only from ceramics made in the region.

In a place with so much history, it's hardly surprising to find a variety of museums. At the **Museo Regional de Antropología e Historia de Puebla**, historic sculpture, photographs, and armory allow visitors a broad overview of the area's cultural development, from the pre-Hispanic era on to the Mexican Revolution. The fifteen exhibition rooms at the **Museo de Arte José Luis Bello y González** house Talavera ceramics, local marquetry, majolica pottery, and oil paintings. At the **Museo de Arte Popular Poblano**, six exhibition rooms represent the regions of the state of Puebla through displays of crafts and cooking utensils.

No discussion of Puebla is complete without a mention of its cuisine. Puebla is the home of *mole poblano.* Consisting of a spicy chocolate sauce served over chicken or turkey, the dish was allegedly created by a local nun. Another well-known dish is *chiles en nogada.* Its colors are those of the national flag: large green chilies are stuffed with meat and dried fruit, covered in creamy white walnut sauce, and sprinkled with red pomegranate seeds. Other local delicacies include *cemita,* a sesame roll filled with *chiles rellenos,* ham or white cheese, and seasoned with herbs.

Those hoping to work off a filling meal should visit the two nearby national parks. **Izta-Popo National Park** has about sixty-four thousand acres with spectacular views of the Popocatépetl and Iztacíhuatl volcanoes. At **La Malintzi National Park**, guides can help visitors climb a dormant volcano. Trails run past vegetation and narrow mountain ridges. After spending the night in a cabin, visitors can head to the summit, and leave the world below.

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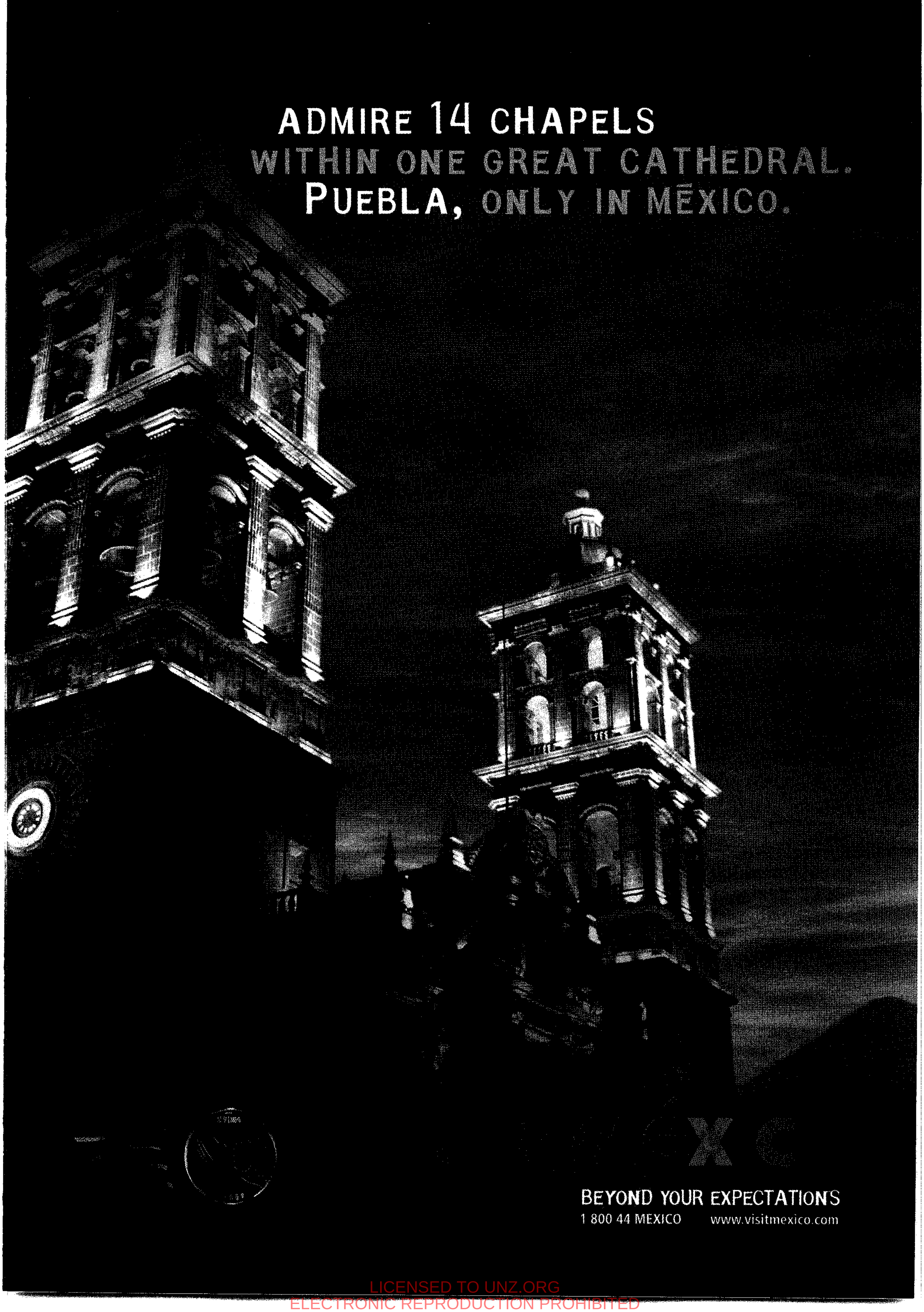
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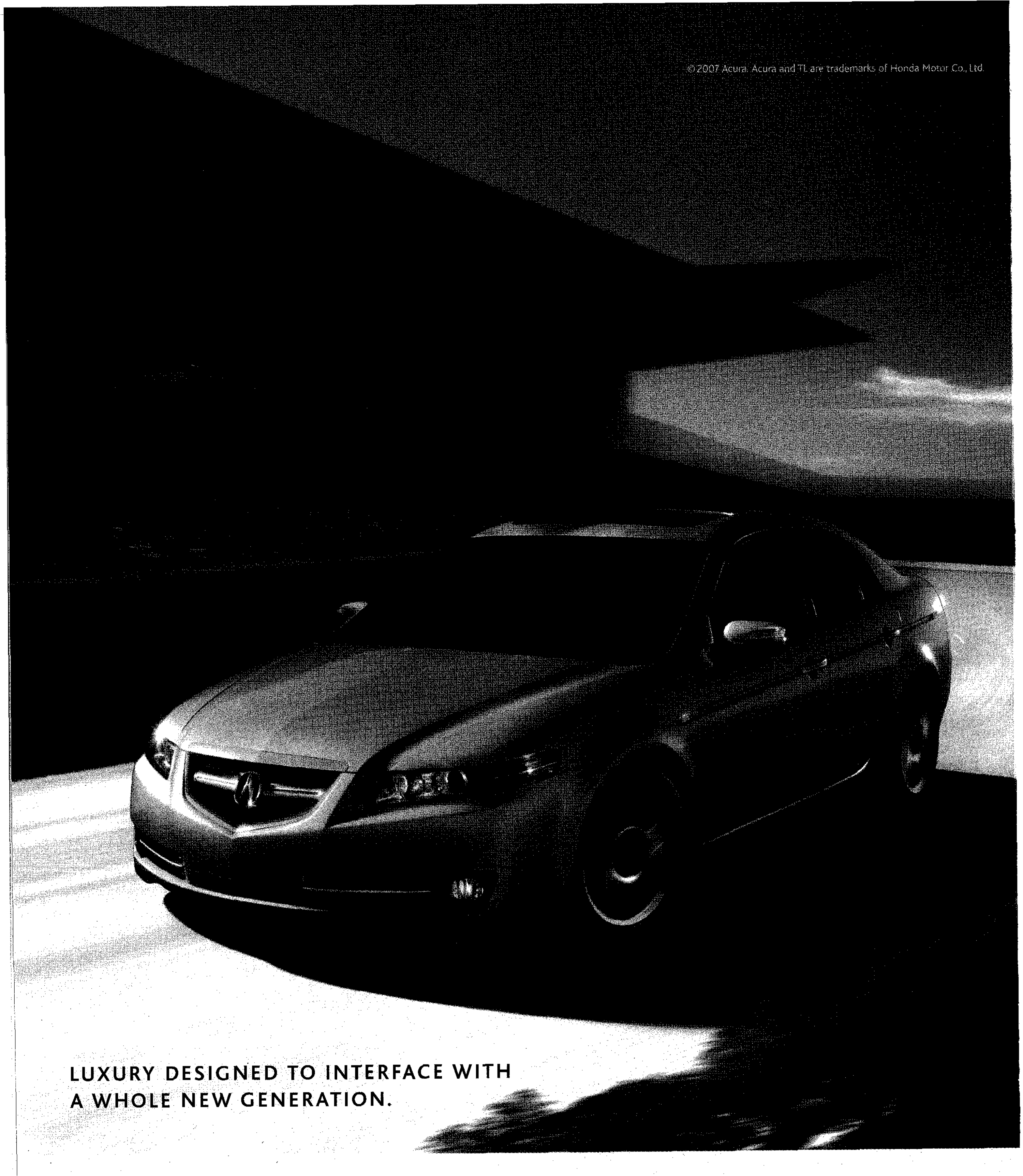
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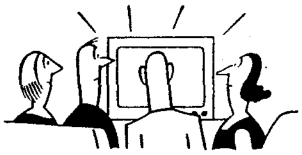
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
GOING AFTER HILLARY

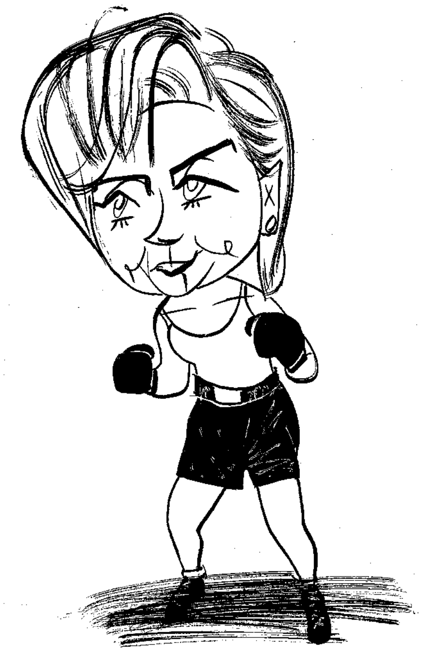


It took until the final minutes of last week's debate among the Democratic Presidential contenders for the flying saucers to make their appearance. Though the special effects were subtle, there was a surprise cameo by an important movie star. The magic moment came when Tim Russert, who, along with Brian Williams, was manning ground control for MSNBC, asked one of the contenders what he termed "a serious question."

> Q: The godmother of your daughter, Shirley MacLaine, writes in her new book that you sighted a U.F.O. over her home in Washington state, that you found the encounter extremely moving, that it was a "triangular craft, silent and hovering," that you "felt a connection to your heart and heard directions in your mind." Now, did you see a U.F.O.?
>
> A: I did. And the rest of the account—I didn't—it was an unidentified flying object, O.K.? It's, like—it's unidentified.

Congressman Dennis Kucinich—for it was he—is indeed the candidate whom it is easiest to imagine walking up the gangplank of the glowing mother ship in the final scene of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Many viewers may not have been aware of the identity of his daughter's godmother, or of the corollary of that fact: that Warren Beatty, a player in Democratic Party politics for forty years, is Kucinich's daughter's goduncle—and, therefore, Kucinich's godcousin, or something. There is more than one dynast in the Democratic field.

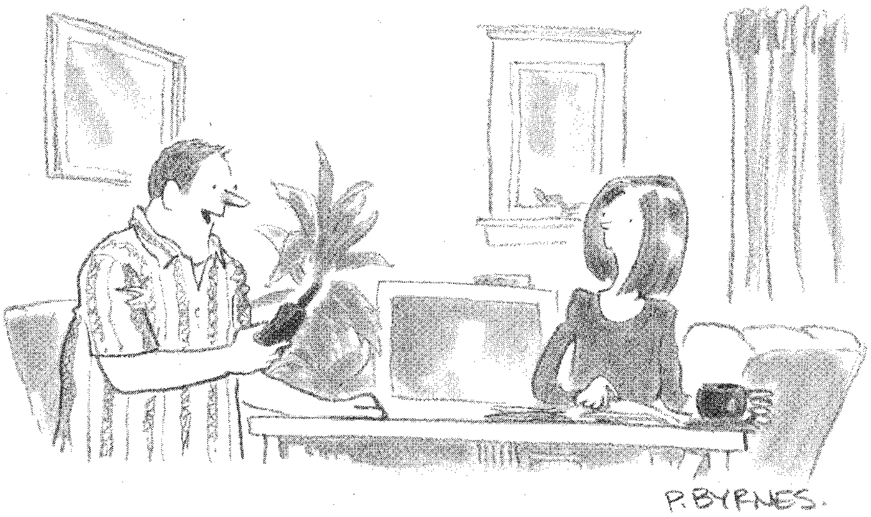
And more than one space cadet. The other, Mike Gravel, was missing this time, having been triaged out on the ground that his campaign has consisted almost entirely of showing up for TV debates, to which his passport, now expired, was his service as a senator, which ended a quarter century ago. Of the remaining seven, six—Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards, plus Governor Bill Richardson and the two senatorial lions, Joseph Biden and Christopher Dodd—are plausible Presidential figures. Kucinich, though implausible, at least represents something outside himself—the Pacifica Radio wing of the Party—and he does not always finish last in the polls.



The earth has already circled the sun once since this campaign began and will circle it again before it's over. But last week's debate kicked the proceedings into warp speed: with a mere two months until the Iowa caucus, we have reached the primary's equivalent of the general-election campaign's post-Labor Day, 2008, sprint.

By the time the lights came up in Philadelphia last week, the evening's theme had become settled wisdom among MSNBC's color commentators. "The target tonight: Hillary Clinton. Obama and Edwards are expected to come out swinging" (Tucker Carlson). Obama "has got to attack, and he has got to explain why Hillary Clinton cannot win the Presidency" (Howard Fineman). "Will Barack Obama hit the champ or hit the tank? Tonight's the night!" (Chris Matthews). Obama himself had helped write this script, giving a pre-debate interview to the *Times*, in which, according to the reporters' distillation of a nearly hour-long conversation, he promised to "start confronting" Clinton and "go on the offensive." But those were the reporters' words, not Obama's. His words, which could be found in an excerpted transcript on the *Times* Web site, were calmer. "I think she is an admirable person, I think she's a capable senator, I think there's overlap between some of her ideas and mine," he said. "The case I'm making is not that she's a terrible person or would be a terrible President. The case I'm making is that I would be better at those

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"Mind if I have the guys over to watch some poker?"

• •

things that the country needs right now."

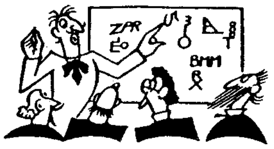
Not exactly a prescription for a "steel-cage match," for which, as David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, correctly told the Washington *Post*, "there's a tremendous bloodlust out there in the political community." And a steel-cage match it wasn't. The nastiest questioning of Clinton came from Russert, not from Edwards or Obama, who (Edwards especially) were frequently sharp with her but never uncivil. At bottom, the differences among them on questions of substance are small; in domestic matters they are almost invisible. Even on foreign policy, they are not the stuff of slashing, indignant attack. This is not 1968, when the bitter enmity between Democrats who supported the Vietnam War and Democrats who opposed it sundered friendships and lamed the Party for a generation. Unlike Vietnam, Iraq is a Republican war. All the Democrats are against it. Obama is more than within his rights to highlight Clinton's vote to authorize it, but, for reasons both temperamental and tactical, he does so in measured tones. Millions of rank-and-file Democrats were snookered into supporting this war, or at least the threat of it. Like Clinton, they were for it before they were against it, and they may not appreciate having their noses rubbed too vigorously in what was their mistake as well as hers. Anyhow, Democratic voters want a Democratic victory more than they want any particular candidate. Compared with her primary rivals, Clinton provokes ambivalent, sometimes negative, reactions; but if Clinton it must be, few of her rivals' supporters will want to be complicit in lessening her chances of winning next November.

On two of the matters about which Clinton was harried in last week's debate—her White House records and New York State's current controversy over driver's licenses for undocumented workers, a.k.a. illegal aliens—her opponents saw a tactical opening and lunged for it. Fair enough. Still, her sins in these matters are as minor as their penumbras are large. The torpor of ex-Presidential paper processing is mostly due to rules changes dictated by the present Administration, which have slowed the Reagan Library's response time to Freedom of Information Act requests, for example, from a year and a half to six and a half years. But the kerfuffle is a reminder of the former First Lady's long-ago stubbornness about releasing her (perfectly harmless) Rose Law Firm records, thus stoking the (perfectly bogus) Whitewater "scandal." More broadly, it conjures up the baggage which would accompany the return of the Clinton marital drama to the White House stage. If she had been prepared for the driver's-license question, as she should have been, she might have pointed out that seven states now issue licenses regardless of immigration status, that doing so actually improves security with respect to terrorism (because applicants must produce a passport or other proof of identity as well as proof of residence in the state), and that the New York proposal has been amended to allow the undocumented to obtain a driver's certificate that cannot be used for federal identification purposes, as in boarding airplanes. Instead, she waffled. She was right to argue that the states have been left to cope with the detritus of President Bush's failed immigration reform. But driver's licenses for the undocumented is a perilous issue for Democrats, tailor-made for nativist demagoguery.

Meanwhile, back in outer space, Congressman Kucinich struggled to legitimatize his close encounter. "Jimmy Carter saw a U.F.O.," he protested. A true fact, but one unlikely to impress the gang at Fox News, where John Gibson rushed out an Internet column titled "Dennis Kucinich's U.F.O. Comments Prove He's Nuts." Maybe, but he and Carter aren't the only saucer spotters. Ronald Reagan saw two.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

NEW MATH
A FIREFIGHTER'S THEOREM



One Saturday in August, Rhonda Roland Shearer, the widow of the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, was on her way back from the park with her daughter and two grandsons. They made a stop, as they often do, at the fire station on Sixth and Houston, so that the boys could check out the fire trucks. Joey Graffagnino showed the kids around the truck while Shearer chatted with another firefighter, Bobby Beddia. Shearer said recently, "He mentioned that he was very lucky, because he was fifty-three, so this year he got to experience living in his 'birth year.' "

Shearer, an artist who has done some work with fractal geometry and runs a group called Art Science Research Laboratory, asked Beddia what he meant. He explained that he was born in 1953 (in September), so his age matched the last two digits of the year in which he was born: a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence. "He had this glow that I recognized from seeing the faces of mathematicians when they've discovered a beautiful idea," Shearer said. "I told him, 'You should really contact a mathematician to work out a proof.' As I was saying that, I was secretly planning to explore it myself and surprise him."

Shearer and her family went to lunch. A few hours later, she got a call from a friend: a seven-alarm fire had broken out in the vacant Deutsche Bank Building, near Ground Zero, and two firemen—Graffagnino and Beddia—had been killed. Shearer decided to continue investigating Beddia's observation, as a tribute. She called her friend Richard Brandt, a retired N.Y.U. physicist. He pointed out something that would be obvious to mathematicians: the "birth year" can happen only in an even-numbered year—in Beddia's case, the year beginning in 2006, or, in Brandt's case, 1982, the year when he turned forty-one (since he was born in '41). "It's simple, but the originality is to recognize that it's happening," Brandt said the other day.

Shearer told the story to Barry Cipra, a freelance math writer in Minnesota. "When I described it to my wife, she immediately thought of the champagne birthday—when you reach the age of the day of the month you were born," Cipra said. "But nobody I've run this by has ever heard of this notion. What's sort of great about it is that it will happen to everybody if you live long enough. If you were born in 2000, it happens instantaneously. The people who were born at the end of the century have to take care of themselves."

Cipra wrote a short paper on the idea, which he calls the "Beddian year." "It struck me that, at any given moment, the world consists of two types of people: those who have reached their 'Beddian' age, and those who haven't," Cipra writes. "I got to wondering which group is larger." That question is really demographic—it depends on generational shifts—but he boils it down to a respectably difficult math problem: "What is the range of ages of people who currently (in 2007) are pre-Beddian?" A hint: they don't fall into a single age group. For example, in 2008, Shearer, born in '54, and her grandson Fionn, born in '04, will share the same Beddian year. (He'll be four, and she'll be fifty-four.)

It took Cipra the better part of a week to come up with the complete answer—one that describes, for any given year, the ranges of people who are pre-Beddian. For those who can make sense of it:

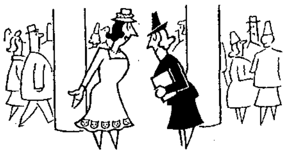
Beddia Theorem: In any odd-numbered year, there are exactly 50 pre-Beddian ages. In any even-numbered year, there are exactly 49 pre-Beddian ages. Moreover, with three exceptions, these ages consist of two separate spans. The exceptions are 1998 (or any year ending in '98), for which the pre-Beddian ages comprise the single span 0-48, 1999 (or any year ending in '99), for which they comprise the single span 0-49, and 2000 (or any year ending in '00), for which they comprise the single span 1-49.

The other night at the fire station, some friends of Beddia's confirmed that he was a numbers guy: he liked poker and golf; when he played roulette, he always played twenty-four—the number of his engine company. "Let me tell you what this means," Lieutenant Ray O'Hanlon said, slipping off his boots. "It means that if you were talking to Bobby in a bar, and suddenly it came up 'How old are you?' and Bobby says, 'I'm the same age as the year I was born'—now you have to talk to him more. That was Bobby." O'Hanlon continued, "Trust me, it wasn't a math quandary. It was a . . . would a pickup line be the wrong answer?"

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*

FIRST LADIES' CLUB

THE DRESSER



Last summer, Arnold Scaasi, the septuagenarian fashion designer, received a phone call from the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, informing him of a forthcoming exhibition, titled "First Ladies and Fashion," that was to focus exclusively upon his creations. "I didn't even know there was an Abraham Lincoln museum in Fort Wayne, so this was a lovely surprise," Scaasi explained the other afternoon, perched under a Picasso in the drawing room of his duplex on Beekman Place. Scaasi was tan—he has a place in Palm Beach—with blond hair cut into wingy bangs.

Thus far in his career, Scaasi—who began life in Montreal as Arnold Isaacs and, upon entering the fashion business, reversed the spelling of his last name to Italianate effect—has made clothes for five First Ladies: the Mesdames Eisenhower, Kennedy, Bush I, Clinton, and Bush II. Scaasi's first visit to the White House was in 1958, for a tea with Mamie Eisenhower. "Have you been to the White House? You really should go—it is fabulous," he said. The wife of the thirty-fourth President, he recalled, was "perfectly charming, and very good-looking, and she had beautiful skin." Scaasi was summoned back for a fitting months later, whereupon he discovered that Mrs. Eisenhower preferred to go without a bra—less a proto-feminist gesture than a personal verdict on the ideal fifties bustline. "In those days, they were very pulled up and pushed out, so it made a lot of creases near the armhole," Scaasi explained. "She didn't want to have those ugly creases."

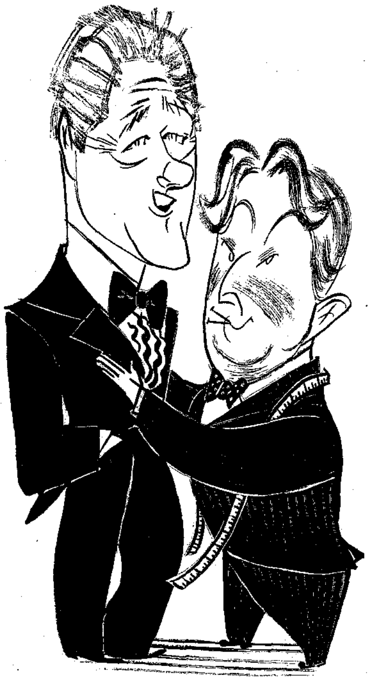
Jacqueline Kennedy, Mamie Eisenhower's successor, was an established customer of Scaasi's ready-to-wear collection, sold at Bergdorf Goodman, but he never got to see her in her underwear in the White House. Not long after President Kennedy's inauguration, Scaasi did receive a call from the First Lady's office with a request for some of his recent styles. "I said, 'We will only charge her wholesale, not retail, just as we did with Mrs. Eisenhower,' " he recalled. "There was a pause, and the young woman at the other end of the line said, 'I don't think Mrs. Kennedy pays for her clothes.' " (The gig went to Oleg Cassini.)

Scaasi returned to action during the first Bush Presidency, when he was charged with making the Silver Fox more foxy. Scaasi has a particular fondness for Barbara Bush, who, he reveals in his memoir, "Women I Have Dressed (and Undressed!)," has more traditional taste in foundation garments than did Mrs. Eisenhower, favoring a full slip. For her husband's inauguration, Mrs. Bush selected a form-fitting blue velvet-and-satin gown. "She was a size 16, and I have this belief that if you are large and you wear loose clothes it makes you look even larger," said Scaasi, who, along with his companion, Parker Ladd, was invited to Washington for the festivities. A few days later, the First Lady called. "She said, 'You made a sow's ear into a silk purse.' I said, 'Barbara, I have to get off the phone now or I am going to burst into tears.' "

Scaasi's relationship with Barbara's daughter-in-law is less intimate, though he was drafted to design a gown for Laura Bush's first state dinner. He proposed a scarlet gown with what passes on Pennsylvania Avenue for plunging décolletage.

"She is very good-looking and has a very good figure, but she wears all of these clothes that cover her up," Scaasi said. "She has great legs, and this long neck, and I said, 'We must do a low neckline.' She said, 'But I have freckles on my chest. Isn't that awful?' And I said, 'Just put some makeup on it—it's not the end of the world.'"

With the White House's female inhabitant immediately prior—and possibly immediately subsequent—to the junior Bushes, Scaasi claims a relationship that is cordial, if not close. "I always steered clear of her, because I had dressed Mrs. Bush," he said of Hillary Clinton. "Her office called me after her inaugural, and I was out of town or something, and I never got back to them. But then I went to an event at the Museum of Modern Art and I was pushed towards her, and she was so charming and so nice. She said to her assistant, 'This is Arnold Scaasi! This is the man who made that beautiful black chiffon dress of mine with all the tiers.'" (Mrs. Clinton was referring to an off-the-rack number shaped rather like a gothic Christmas tree.) Scaasi has never made an outfit especially for Mrs. Clinton, though he says that, if called, he will design. And he feels confident that he could also address the prospect of the first First Gentleman. "I can make men's suits," he said. "As long as I'm dressing the first lady President, I won't mind."

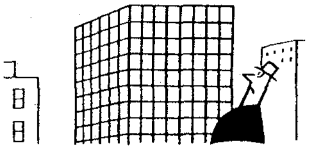


Bill Clinton and Arnold Scaasi

—Rebecca Mead

NUMBERS DEPT.

ON THE AVENUE



When a large steel bucket fell from the roof of a fifty-four-story construction site in midtown the other day, a news account described the offending building's location as "1 Bryant Park"—a stately address, to be sure, but not a real one. "Bryant Park is a park, named Bryant," Anthony Borelli, the director of land use, planning, and development at the Manhattan Borough President's office, said recently. "That building is kitty-corner to Bryant Park." In other words, the building, also known as the Bank of America Tower, is on Sixth Avenue at Forty-second Street. It costs fifty-five hundred dollars to apply for a dispensation from the ordinary grid system, known officially as a "vanity address," from the Topographical Bureau, which Borelli oversees. "They have officially requested it, and we'll consider it," he said of the developers of the would-be 1 Bryant Park.

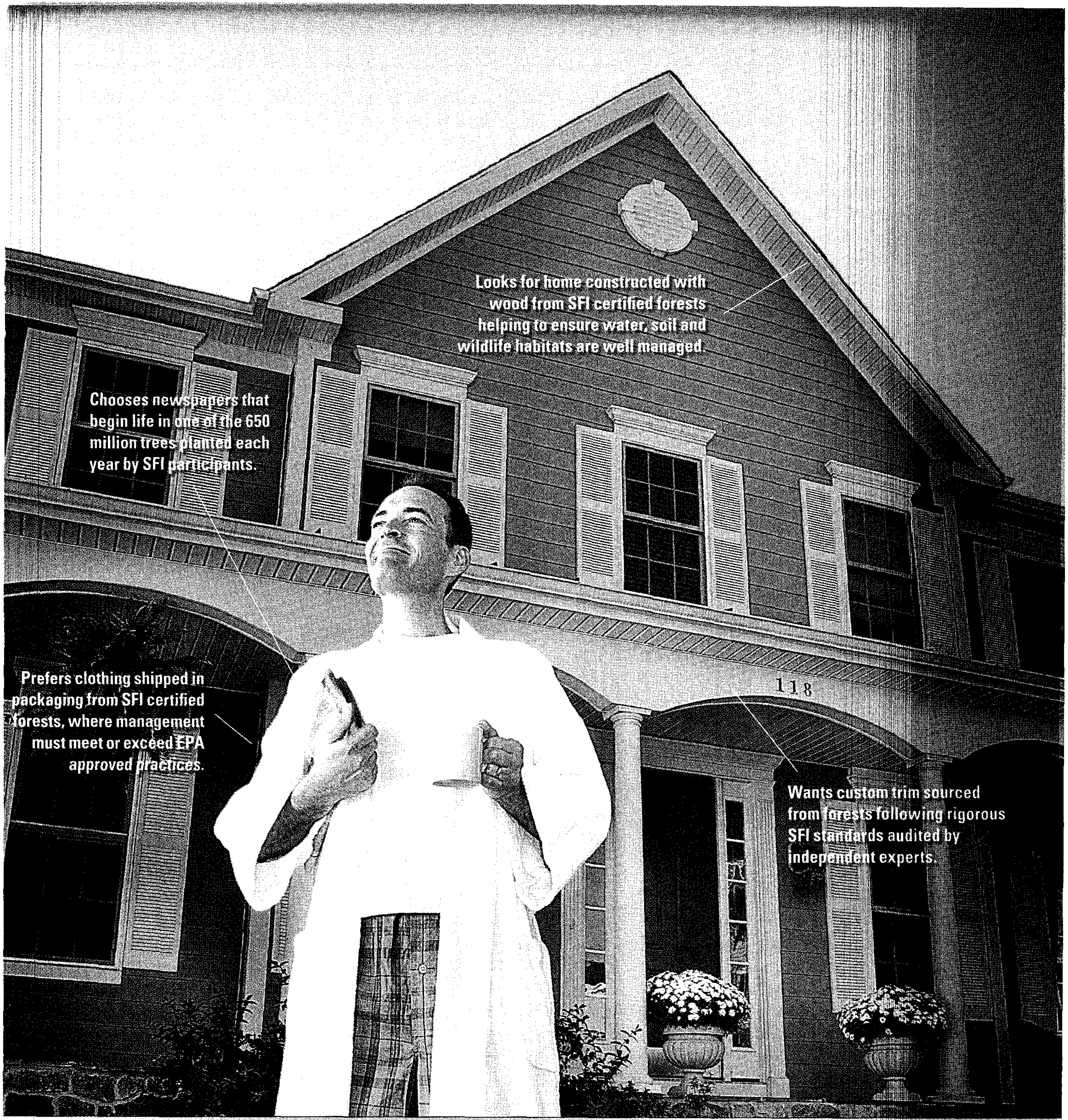
Borelli is a somewhat reluctant steward of the vanity-address program, which dates back several decades and can be blamed for, among other things, the proliferation of the word "plaza" and the disproportionate number of businesses and homeowners with Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue letterheads. ("Pulling an avenue address over" is the topographical parlance for denying that your building's real entrance is on, say, East Seventy-sixth Street.) "I usually try to talk them out of it," Borelli said, referring to vainglorious building owners. "If you're having a heart attack and you've got a vanity address, it could take a few crucial moments for the E.M.T. driver to figure it out. And you could be dead by the time help arrives." The residents of 44 West Sixty-second Street once sued the owners of 62 West Sixty-second Street, whose nifty mnemonic address comes at the expense of directional logic: it is east, not west, of No. 44. The plaintiffs were upset about missing out on pizza deliveries and Town Car pickups amid the confusion. (They lost.)

Borelli had a map of midtown on his desk, and noted that this magazine story was likely to be written and edited in a building whose address is 4 Times Square—an honorific that predates his taking office, two years ago. "You could say that it's across the street from 1 Times Square or 6 Times Square in order to help your friends find you," he said, and paused before continuing. "I'm being facetious, because where are *those* places?" His map showed that 2 Times Square is five blocks north of Nos. 1, 3, and 4. Borelli recently informed the developers of a planned office tower at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Forty-second Street that, regardless of what some promotional materials might say, their site, on the edge of Hell's Kitchen, is not recognized as 11 Times Square.

Not all requests are so unreasonable. The most recent application that Borelli approved came from Goldman Sachs, which is building new headquarters in Battery Park City, across from the World Trade Center site. "It's on Route 9A, which is the West Side Highway, in front of what is technically Marginal Street," he said, turning to a giant map of Manhattan that was mounted above his desk. "The everyday person would never know that Marginal Street exists, because, physically, it's a highway." Then he pointed at a couple of other little-known roads called Marginal Street—one near the sewage-treatment plant below Riverbank State Park and one in Inwood, near Sherman Creek. "It's, like, the technical name for streets with no name," he said. "But we don't do street names. That's the City Council." It seemed easier to grant Goldman a more dignified address: 200 West Street.

Real-estate peacocking is less prevalent in the outer boroughs. A topographical engineer in Queens, reached on the telephone last week, quickly named all seven of his borough's vanity addresses, including 1 New York Times Plaza, which refers to the paper's printing facility on the Whitestone Expressway. Brooklyn now has 100 Brooklyn Bridge Park, which is really on Furman Street. In Staten Island, a spokesman reported, "We've never given out a vanity address in all our years." And a representative from the Bronx Borough President's office said, "I've never even thought of it before, but it's kind of cool."

—Ben McGrath



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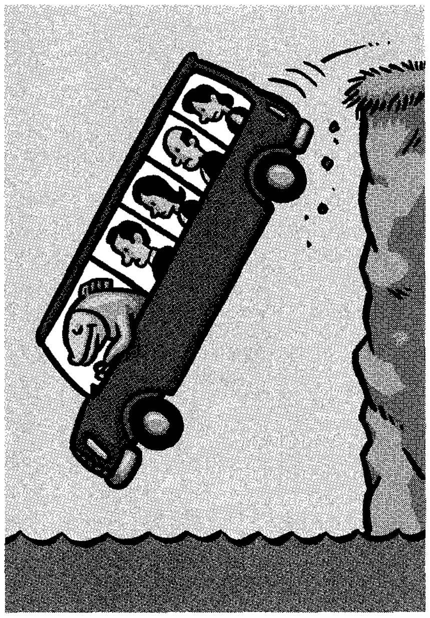
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PERFORMANCE-PAY PERPLEXES

The havoc on Wall Street following the collapse of the subprime-mortgage market boils down to a simple truth: for years, lots of very smart people took lots of very foolish risks, betting borrowed billions on dubious mortgage derivatives, and eventually the odds caught up with them. But behind that simple truth is a more surprising one: the financial whizzes made bad decisions in part because that's what they were paid to do.

Not literally, of course. The way that hedge-fund managers and investment-bank C.E.O.s get paid is supposed to make them perform better for the investors they serve. Hedge-fund managers, for instance, typically are paid "2 and 20": they get two per cent of total assets as a management fee, and they keep twenty per cent of their investment gains (above some agreed-upon benchmark). Letting hedge-fund managers keep a chunk of their winnings gives them an incentive to do well for their clients: in theory, they get rich only if their clients do.

In practice, though, things don't always work that way. Fund managers get bonuses at the end of each year, and they keep those performance fees even if the fund eventually goes south. So if a billion-dollar hedge fund rises twenty per cent in its first year and falls twenty per cent in its second, its investors will have lost money, while the fund's manager might earn forty million dollars in performance fees. Hedge funds do have a rule that's meant to deal with this problem: when a fund loses money, it yields no performance bonus until investors get back to even. The catch is that nothing prevents a hedge-fund manager from simply shutting down after a bad year and walking away with the fees he's already accrued. Sometimes this happens out of necessity: the two subprime-focussed funds at Bear Stearns whose closure precipitated this summer's market mayhem had seen their assets annihilated. But sometimes it happens because a manager has no incentive to keep supervising a fund that won't generate a decent performance fee. In either case, the managers keep what they've earned and investors are left holding the bag. In short, a hedge-fund manager can do a lousy job and still become very wealthy.

Because fund managers reap large rewards on the upside without a correspondingly punitive downside, they have a much greater incentive to take big risks than ordinary investors do. Hedge funds generally leverage their bets with large amounts of borrowed cash—one Bear Stearns fund, for instance, borrowed ten times its capital—which makes it possible for them to turn small gains into enormous ones. Of course, leverage can also turn small losses into enormous ones. That helps explain why bad bets by hedge funds have been at the heart of the biggest financial-market meltdowns of the past decade.



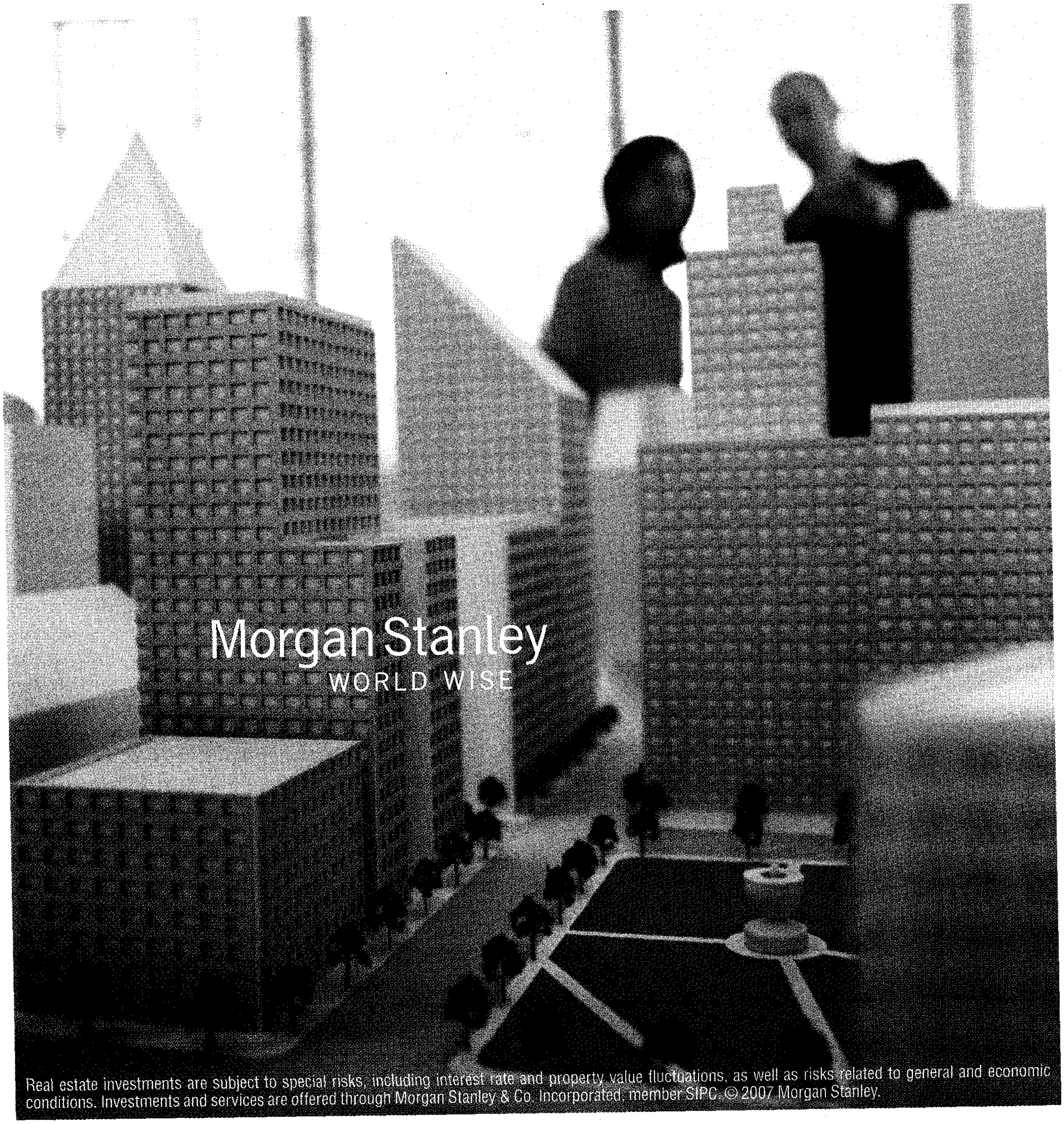
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

A similar tendency to underplay risk is at work in parts of corporate America, thanks to the ubiquity of stock options. Options, which give executives the opportunity to buy company stock at a predetermined "strike price" within a certain period, seem like an ideal tool for insuring that a C.E.O. cares as much about the company's stock price as his shareholders do. The problem is that if a company's stock price is below the options' strike price when they expire those options become valueless—and they're just as valueless whether the stock price is a dollar below the strike price or fifteen dollars below it. To a shareholder, the difference between a stock that's at thirty dollars and a stock that's at twenty means a lot. But to a C.E.O. who has a pile of options with a strike price of thirty-one dollars, the difference means much less. As a result, that C.E.O. is likely to embrace projects that promise big rewards, even if they also entail a significant chance of failure.

Not surprisingly, a recent study of almost a thousand companies by the management professors W. Gerard Sanders and Donald Hambrick found that C.E.O.s whose compensation was made up mostly of stock options tended to "swing for the fences," making investments and acquisitions that were riskier than those made by other executives. As a result, the performance of the companies run by the risk-takers was far more volatile, and not for the good of the companies: the risky strategies were more likely to end in a big failure than a big gain. Generous options grants may also encourage fraud; the business professors Jared Harris and Philip Bromiley, who have made a study of hundreds of firms forced to restate earnings after accounting irregularities, found that companies that paid out most of their compensation in stock options were far more likely to end up restating earnings. And, as with hedge funds, the perverse effects of performance pay are exacerbated by the fact that big bonuses are often based on short-term performance. Stanley O'Neal, who was recently forced to resign as the C.E.O. of Merrill Lynch, made eighty-four million dollars in 2005 and 2006, a figure based in part on the huge profits that Merrill booked as a result of its forays into the subprime market. Last week, thanks to those same forays, Merrill announced giant losses and writedowns that obliterated most of those profits. O'Neal, however, won't be giving any money back.

One lesson of the current market chaos, then, is that it's hard to get incentives right. Investors, after all, want fund managers and corporate executives to take reasonable risks—that's the only way to make money—and many of them do just that. But, in trying to reward reasonable risks, we've encouraged unreasonable ones as well. And when you make it rational for people to bet the house, you may end up without a roof over your head.

—*James Surowiecki*



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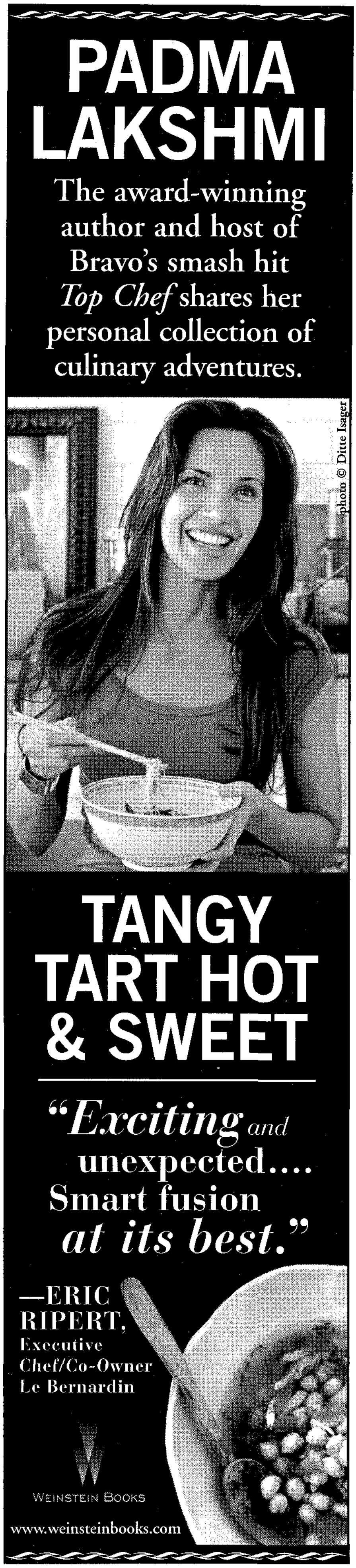

PADMA LAKSHMI

The award-winning author and host of Bravo's smash hit *Top Chef* shares her personal collection of culinary adventures.

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DEPT. OF CRIMINOLOGY

DANGEROUS MINDS

Criminal profiling made easy.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

On November 16, 1940, workers at the Consolidated Edison building on West Sixty-fourth Street in Manhattan found a homemade pipe bomb on a windowsill. Attached was a note: "Con Edison crooks, this is for you." In September of 1941, a second bomb was found, on Nineteenth Street, just a few blocks from Con Edison's headquarters, near Union Square. It had been left in the street, wrapped in a sock. A few months later, the New York police received a letter promising to "bring the Con Edison to justice—they will pay for their dastardly deeds." Sixteen other letters followed, between 1941 and 1946, all written in block letters, many repeating the phrase "dastardly deeds" and all signed with the initials "F.P." In March of 1950, a third bomb—larger and more powerful than the others—was found on the lower level of Grand Central Terminal. The next was left in a phone booth at the New York Public Library. It exploded, as did one placed in a phone booth in Grand Central. In 1954, the Mad Bomber—as he came to be known—struck four times, once in Radio City Music Hall, sending shrapnel throughout the audience. In 1955, he struck six times. The city was in an uproar. The police were getting nowhere. Late in 1956, in desperation, Inspector Howard Finney, of the New York City Police Department's crime laboratory, and two plainclothesmen paid a visit to a psychiatrist by the name of James Brussel.

Brussel was a Freudian. He lived on Twelfth Street, in the West Village, and smoked a pipe. In Mexico, early in his career, he had done counter-espionage work for the F.B.I. He wrote many books, including "Instant Shrink: How to Become an Expert Psychiatrist in Ten Easy Lessons." Finney put a stack of documents on Brussel's desk: photographs of unexploded bombs, pictures of devastation, photostats of F.P.'s neatly lettered missives. "I didn't miss the look in the two plainclothesmen's eyes," Brussel writes in his memoir, "Casebook of a Crime Psychiatrist." "I'd seen that look before, most often in the Army, on the faces of hard, old-line, field-grade officers who were sure this newfangled psychiatry business was all nonsense."

He began to leaf through the case materials. For sixteen years, F.P. had been fixated on the notion that Con Ed had done him some terrible injustice. Clearly, he was clinically paranoid. But paranoia takes some time to develop. F.P. had been bombing since 1940, which suggested that he was now middle-aged. Brussel looked closely at the precise lettering of F.P.'s notes to the police. This was an orderly man. He would be cautious. His work record would be exemplary. Further, the language suggested some degree of education. But there was a stilted quality to the word choice and the phrasing. Con Edison was often referred to as "the Con Edison." And who still used the expression "dastardly deeds"? F.P. seemed to be foreign-born. Brussel looked closer at the letters, and noticed that all the letters were perfect block capitals, except the "W"s. They were misshapen, like two "U"s. To Brussel's eye, those "W"s looked like a pair of breasts. He flipped to the crime-scene descriptions. When F.P. planted his bombs in movie theatres, he would slit the underside of the seat with a knife and stuff his explosives into the upholstery. Didn't that seem like a symbolic act of penetrating a woman, or castrating a man—or perhaps both? F.P. had probably never progressed beyond the Oedipal stage. He was unmarried, a loner. Living with a mother figure. Brussel made another leap. F.P. was a Slav. Just as the use of a garrote would have suggested someone of Mediterranean extraction, the bomb-knife combination struck him as Eastern European. Some of the letters had been posted from Westchester County, but

F.P. wouldn't have mailed the letters from his home town. Still, a number of cities in southeastern Connecticut had a large Slavic population. And didn't you have to pass through Westchester to get to the city from Connecticut?

Brussel waited a moment, and then, in a scene that has become legendary among criminal profilers, he made a prediction:

> "One more thing." I closed my eyes because I didn't want to see their reaction. I saw the Bomber: impeccably neat, absolutely proper. A man who would avoid the newer styles of clothing until long custom had made them conservative. I saw him clearly—much more clearly than the facts really warranted. I knew I was letting my imagination get the better of me, but I couldn't help it.
>
> "One more thing," I said, my eyes closed tight. "When you catch him—and I have no doubt you will—he'll be wearing a double-breasted suit."
>
> "Jesus!" one of the detectives whispered.
>
> "And it will be buttoned," I said. I opened my eyes. Finney and his men were looking at each other.
>
> "A double-breasted suit," said the Inspector.
>
> "Yes."
>
> "Buttoned."
>
> "Yes."
>
> He nodded. Without another word, they left.

A month later, George Metesky was arrested by police in connection with the New York City bombings. His name had been changed from Milauskas. He lived in Waterbury, Connecticut, with his two older sisters. He was unmarried. He was unfailingly neat. He attended Mass regularly. He had been employed by Con Edison from 1929 to 1931, and claimed to have been injured on the job. When he opened the door to the police officers, he said, "I know why you fellows are here. You think I'm the Mad Bomber." It was midnight, and he was in his pajamas. The police asked that he get dressed. When he returned, his hair was combed into a pompadour and his shoes were newly shined. He was also wearing a double-breasted suit—buttoned.

In a new book, "Inside the Mind of BTK," the eminent F.B.I. criminal profiler John Douglas tells the story of a serial killer who stalked the streets of Wichita, Kansas, in the nineteen-seventies and eighties. Douglas was the model for Agent Jack Crawford in "The Silence of the Lambs." He was the protégé of the pioneering F.B.I. profiler Howard Teten, who helped establish the bureau's Behavioral Science Unit, at Quantico, in 1972, and who was a protégé of Brussel—which, in the close-knit fraternity of profilers, is like being analyzed by the analyst who was analyzed by Freud. To Douglas, Brussel was the father of criminal profiling, and, in both style and logic, "Inside the Mind of BTK" pays homage to "Casebook of a Crime Psychiatrist" at every turn.

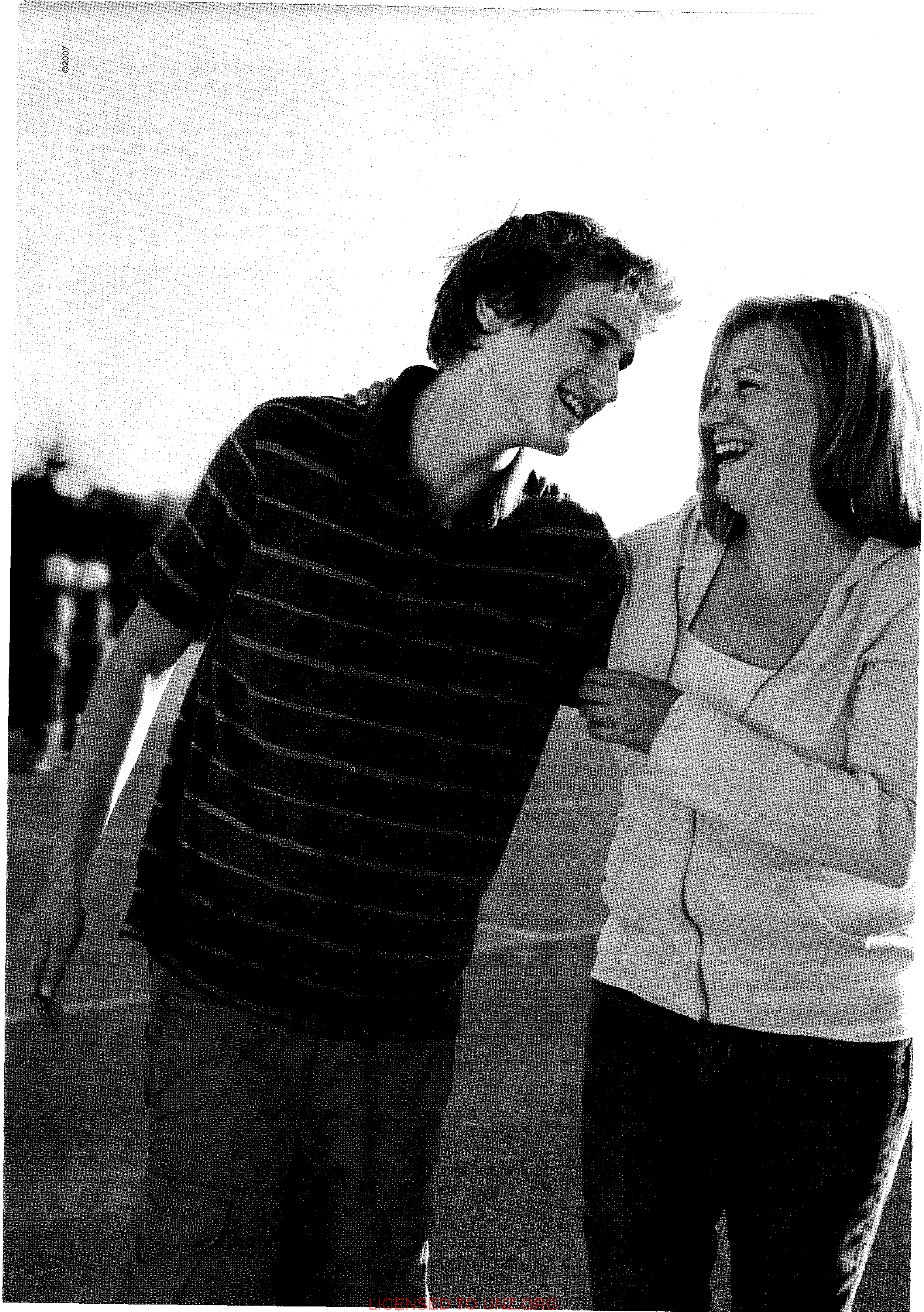
The F.B.I.'s criminal profilers try to think their way into the head of the offender.

GLEN BAXTER

"BTK" stood for "Bind, Torture, Kill"—the three words that the killer used to identify himself in his taunting notes to the Wichita police. He had struck first in January, 1974, when he killed thirty-eight-year-old Joseph Otero in his home, along with his wife, Julie, their son, Joey, and their eleven-year-old daughter, who was found hanging from a water pipe in the basement with semen on her leg. The following April, he stabbed a twenty-four-year-old woman. In March, 1977, he bound and strangled another young woman, and over the next few years he committed at least four more murders. The city of Wichita was in an uproar. The police were getting nowhere. In 1984, in desperation, two police detectives from Wichita paid a visit to Quantico.

The meeting, Douglas writes, was held in a first-floor conference room of the F.B.I.'s forensic-science building. He was then nearly a decade into his career at the Behavioral Science Unit. His first two best-sellers, "Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit," and "Obsession: The FBI's Legendary Profiler Probes the Psyches of Killers, Rapists, and Stalkers and Their Victims and Tells How to Fight Back," were still in the future. Working a hundred and fifty cases a year, he was on the road constantly, but BTK was never far from his thoughts. "Some nights I'd lie awake asking myself, 'Who the hell is this BTK?'" he writes. "What makes a guy like this do what he does? What makes him tick?"

Roy Hazelwood sat next to Douglas. A lean chain-smoker, Hazelwood specialized in sex crimes, and went on to write the best-sellers "Dark Dreams" and "The Evil That Men Do." Beside Hazelwood was an ex-Air Force pilot



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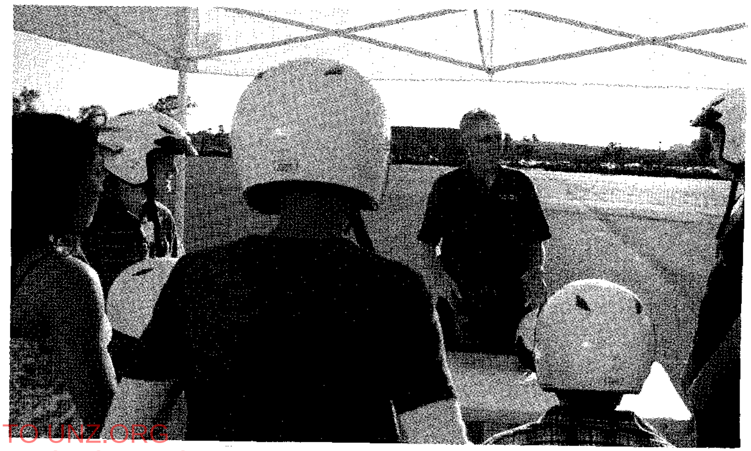


"If we should meet in the woods and anything happens, remember it's just hunting."

named Ron Walker. Walker, Douglas writes, was "whip smart" and an "exceptionally quick study." The three bureau men and the two detectives sat around a massive oak table. "The objective of our session was to keep moving forward until we ran out of juice," Douglas writes. They would rely on the typology developed by their colleague Robert Ressler, himself the author of the true-crime best-sellers "Whoever Fights Monsters" and "I Have Lived in the Monster." The goal was to paint a picture of the killer—of what sort of man BTK was, and what he did, and where he worked, and what he was like—and with that scene "Inside the Mind of BTK" begins.

We are now so familiar with crime stories told through the eyes of the profiler that it is easy to lose sight of how audacious the genre is. The traditional detective story begins with the body and centers on the detective's search for the culprit. Leads are pursued. A net is cast, widening to encompass a bewilderingly diverse pool of suspects: the butler, the spurned lover, the embittered nephew, the shadowy European. That's a Whodunit. In the profiling genre, the net is narrowed. The crime scene doesn't initiate our search for the killer. It defines the killer for us. The profiler sifts through the case materials, looks off into the distance, and *knows*. "Generally, a psychiatrist can study a man and make a few reasonable predictions about what the man may do in the future—how he will react to such-and-such a stimulus, how he will behave in such-and-such a situation," Brussel writes. "What I have done is reverse the terms of the prophecy. By studying a man's deeds, I have deduced what kind of man he might be." Look for a middle-aged Slav in a double-breasted suit. Profiling stories aren't Whodunits; they're Hedunits.

In the Hedunit, the profiler does not catch the criminal. That's for local law enforcement. He takes the meeting. Often, he doesn't write down his predictions. It's up to the visiting police officers to take notes. He does not feel the need to involve himself in the subsequent investigation, or even, it turns out, to justify his predictions. Once, Douglas tells us, he drove down to the local police station and offered his services in the case of an elderly woman who had been savagely beaten and sexually assaulted. The detectives working the crime were regular cops, and Douglas was a bureau guy, so you can imagine him perched on the edge of a desk, the others pulling up chairs around him.

" 'Okay,' I said to the detectives. . . . 'Here's what I think,' " Douglas begins. "It's a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old high school kid. . . . He'll be disheveled-looking, he'll have scruffy hair, generally poorly groomed." He went on: a loner, kind of weird, no girlfriend, lots of bottled-up anger. He comes to the old lady's house. He knows she's alone. Maybe he's done odd jobs for her in the past. Douglas continues:

> I pause in my narrative and tell them there's someone who meets this description out there. If they can find him, they've got their offender.
>
> One detective looks at another. One of them starts to smile. "Are you a psychic, Douglas?"
>
> "No," I say, "but my job would be a lot easier if I were."
>
> "Because we had a psychic, Beverly Newton, in here a couple of weeks ago, and she said just about the same things."

You might think that Douglas would bridle at that comparison. He is, after all, an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who studied with Teten, who studied with Brussel. He is an ace profiler, part of a team that restored the F.B.I.'s reputation for crime-fighting, inspired countless movies, television shows, and best-selling thrillers, and brought the modern tools of psychology to bear on the savagery of the criminal mind—and some cop is calling him a *psychic*. But Douglas doesn't object. Instead, he begins to muse on the ineffable origins of his insights, at which point the question arises of what exactly this mysterious art called profiling is, and whether it can be trusted. Douglas writes,

> What I try to do with a case is to take in all the evidence I have to work with . . . and then put myself mentally and emotionally in the head of the offender. I try to think as he does. Exactly how this happens, I'm not sure, any more than the novelists such as Tom Harris who've consulted me over the years can say exactly how their characters come to life. If there's a psychic component to this, I won't run from it.

In the late nineteen-seventies, John Douglas and his F.B.I. colleague Robert Ressler set out to interview the most notorious serial killers in the country. They started in California, since, as Douglas says, "California has always had more than its share of weird and spectacular crimes." On weekends and days off, over the next months, they stopped by one federal prison after another, until they had interviewed thirty-six murderers.

Douglas and Ressler wanted to know whether there was a pattern that connected a killer's life and personality with the nature of his crimes. They were looking for what psychologists would call a homology, an agreement between character and action, and, after comparing what they learned from the killers with what they already knew about the characteristics of their murders, they became convinced that they'd found one.

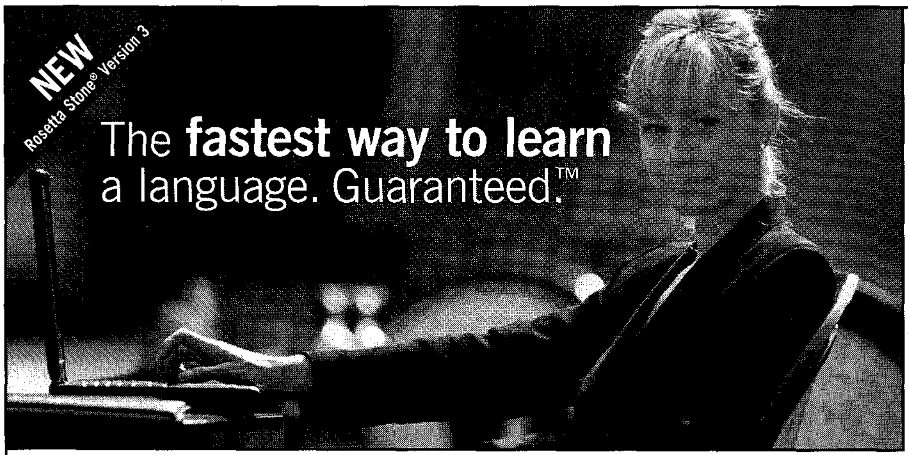
Serial killers, they concluded, fall into one of two categories. Some crime scenes show evidence of logic and planning. The victim has been hunted and selected, in order to fulfill a specific fantasy. The recruitment of the victim might involve a ruse or a con. The perpetrator maintains control throughout the offense. He takes his time with the victim, carefully enacting his fantasies. He is adaptable and mobile. He almost never leaves a weapon behind. He meticulously conceals the body. Douglas and Ressler, in their respective books, call that kind of crime "organized."

In a "disorganized" crime, the victim isn't chosen logically. She's seemingly picked at random and "blitz-attacked," not stalked and coerced. The killer might grab a steak knife from the kitchen and leave the knife behind. The crime is so sloppily executed that the victim often has a chance to fight back. The crime might take place in a high-risk environment. "Moreover, the disorganized killer has no idea of, or interest in, the personalities of his victims," Ressler writes in "Whoever Fights Monsters." "He does not want to know who they are, and many times takes steps to obliterate their personalities by quickly knocking them unconscious or covering their faces or otherwise disfiguring them."

Each of these styles, the argument goes, corresponds to a personality type. The organized killer is intelligent and articulate. He feels superior to those around him. The disorganized killer is unattractive and has a poor self-image. He often has some kind of disability. He's too strange and withdrawn to be married or have a girlfriend. If he doesn't live alone, he lives with his parents. He has pornography stashed in his closet. If he drives at all, his car is a wreck.

"The crime scene is presumed to reflect the murderer's behavior and personality in much the same way as furnishings reveal the homeowner's character," we're told in a crime manual that Douglas and Ressler helped write. The more they learned, the more precise the associations became. If the victim was white, the killer would be white. If the victim was old, the killer would be sexually immature.

"In our research, we discovered that . . . frequently serial offenders had failed in their efforts to join police departments and had taken jobs in related fields, such as security guard or night watchman," Douglas writes. Given that organized rapists were preoccupied with control, it made sense that they would be fascinated by the social institution that symbolizes control. Out of that insight came another prediction: "One of the things we began saying in some of our profiles was that the UNSUB"—the unknown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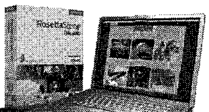

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subject—"would drive a policelike vehicle, say a Ford Crown Victoria or Chevrolet Caprice."

On the surface, the F.B.I.'s system seems extraordinarily useful. Consider a case study widely used in the profiling literature. The body of a twenty-six-year-old special-education teacher was found on the roof of her Bronx apartment building. She was apparently abducted just after she left her house for work, at six-thirty in the morning. She had been beaten beyond recognition, and tied up with her stockings and belt. The killer had mutilated her sexual organs, chopped off her nipples, covered her body with bites, written obscenities across her abdomen, masturbated, and then defecated next to the body.

Let's pretend that we're an F.B.I. profiler. First question: race. The victim is white, so let's call the offender white. Let's say he's in his mid-twenties to early thirties, which is when the thirty-six men in the F.B.I.'s sample started killing. Is the crime organized or disorganized? Disorganized, clearly. It's on a rooftop, in the Bronx, in broad daylight—high risk. So what is the killer doing in the building at six-thirty in the morning? He could be some kind of serviceman, or he could live in the neighborhood. Either way, he appears to be familiar with the building. He's disorganized, though, so he's not stable. If he is employed, it's blue-collar work, at best. He probably has a prior offense, having to do with violence or sex. His relationships with women will be either nonexistent or deeply troubled. And the mutilation and the defecation are so strange that he's probably mentally ill or has some kind of substance-abuse problem. How does that sound? As it turns out, it's spot-on. The killer was Carmine Calabro, age thirty, a single, unemployed, deeply troubled actor who, when he was not in a mental institution, lived with his widowed father on the fourth floor of the building where the murder took place.

But how useful is that profile, really? The police already had Calabro on their list of suspects: if you're looking for the person who killed and mutilated someone on the roof, you don't really need a profiler to tell you to check out the dishevelled, mentally ill guy living with his father on the fourth floor.

That's why the F.B.I.'s profilers have always tried to supplement the basic outlines of the organized/disorganized system with telling details—something that lets the police zero in on a suspect. In the early eighties, Douglas gave a presentation to a roomful of police officers and F.B.I. agents in Marin County about the Trailside Killer, who was murdering female hikers in the hills north of San Francisco. In Douglas's view, the killer was a classic "disorganized" offender—a blitz attacker, white, early to mid-thirties, blue collar, probably with "a history of bed-wetting, fire-starting, and cruelty to animals." Then he went back to how asocial the killer seemed. Why did all the killings take place in heavily wooded areas, miles from the road? Douglas reasoned that the killer required such seclusion because he had some condition that he was deeply self-conscious about. Was it something physical, like a missing limb? But then how could he hike miles into the woods and physically overpower his victims? Finally, it came to him: " 'Another thing,' I added after a pregnant pause, 'the killer will have a speech impediment.' "

And so he did. Now, that's a useful detail. Or is it? Douglas then tells us that he pegged the offender's age as early thirties, and he turned out to be fifty. Detectives use profiles to narrow down the range of suspects. It doesn't do any good to get a specific detail right if you get general details wrong.

In the case of Derrick Todd Lee, the Baton Rouge serial killer, the F.B.I. profile described the offender as a white male blue-collar worker, between twenty-five and thirty-five years old, who "wants to be seen as someone who is attractive and appealing to women." The profile went on, "However, his level of sophistication in interacting with women, especially women who are above him in the social strata, is low. Any contact he has had with women he has found attractive would be described by these women as 'awkward.' " The F.B.I. was right about the killer being a blue-collar male between twenty-five and thirty-five. But Lee turned out to be charming and outgoing, the sort to put on a cowboy hat and snakeskin boots and head for the bars. He was an extrovert with a number of girlfriends and a reputation as a ladies' man. And he wasn't white. He was black.

A profile isn't a test, where you pass if you get most of the answers right. It's a portrait, and all the details have to cohere in some way if the image is to be helpful. In the mid-nineties, the British Home Office analyzed a hundred and eighty-four crimes, to see how many times profiles led to the arrest of a criminal. The profile worked in five of those cases. That's just 2.7 per cent, which makes sense if you consider the position of the detective on the receiving end of a profiler's list of conjectures. Do you believe the stuttering part? Or do you believe the thirty-year-old part? Or do you throw up your hands in frustration?

There is a deeper problem with F.B.I. profiling. Douglas and Ressler didn't interview a representative sample of serial killers to come up with their typology. They talked to whoever happened to be in the neighborhood. Nor did they interview their subjects according to a standardized protocol. They just sat down and chatted, which isn't a particularly firm foundation for a psychological system. So you might wonder whether serial killers can really be categorized by their level of organization.

Not long ago, a group of psychologists at the University of Liverpool decided to test the F.B.I.'s assumptions. First, they made a list of crime-scene characteristics generally considered to show organization: perhaps the victim was alive during the sex acts, or the body was posed in a certain way, or the murder weapon was missing, or the body was concealed, or torture and restraints were involved. Then they made a list of characteristics showing disorganization: perhaps the victim was beaten, the body was left in an isolated spot, the victim's belongings were scattered, or the murder weapon was improvised.

If the F.B.I. was right, they reasoned, the crime-scene details on each of those two lists should "co-occur"—that is, if you see one or more organized traits in a crime, there should be a reasonably high probability of seeing other organized traits. When they looked at a sample of a hundred serial crimes, however, they couldn't find any support for the F.B.I.'s distinction. Crimes don't fall into one camp or the other. It turns out that they're almost always a mixture of a few key organized traits and a random array of disorganized traits. Laurence Alison, one of the leaders of the Liverpool group and the author of "The Forensic Psychologist's Casebook," told me, "The whole business is a lot more complicated than the F.B.I. imagines."

Alison and another of his colleagues also looked at homology. If Douglas was right, then a certain kind of crime should correspond to a certain kind of criminal. So the Liverpool group selected a hundred stranger rapes in the United Kingdom, classifying them according to twenty-eight variables, such as whether a disguise was worn, whether compliments were given, whether there was binding, gagging, or blindfolding, whether there was apologizing or the theft of personal property, and so on. They then looked at whether the patterns in the crimes corresponded to attributes of the criminals—like age, type of employment, ethnicity, level of education, marital status, number of prior convictions, type of prior convictions, and drug use. Were rapists who bind, gag, and blindfold more like one another than they were like rapists who, say, compliment and apologize? The answer is no—not even slightly.

"The fact is that different offenders can exhibit the same behaviors for completely different reasons," Brent Turvey, a forensic scientist who has been highly critical of the F.B.I.'s approach, says. "You've got a rapist who attacks a woman in the park and pulls her shirt up over her face. Why? What does that mean? There are ten different things it could mean. It could mean he doesn't want to see her. It could mean he doesn't want her to see him. It could mean he wants to see her breasts, he wants to imagine someone else, he wants to incapacitate her arms—all of those are possibilities. You can't just look at one behavior in isolation."

A few years ago, Alison went back to the case of the teacher who was murdered on the roof of her building in the Bronx. He wanted to know why, if the F.B.I.'s approach to criminal profiling was based on such simplistic psychology, it continues to have such a sterling reputation. The answer, he suspected, lay in the way the profiles were written, and, sure enough, when he broke down the rooftop-killer analysis, sentence by sentence, he found that it was so full of unverifiable and contradictory and ambiguous language that it could support virtually any interpretation.

Astrologers and psychics have known these tricks for years. The magician Ian Rowland, in his classic "The Full Facts Book of Cold Reading," itemizes them one by one, in what could easily serve as a manual for the beginner profiler. First is the Rainbow Ruse—the "statement which credits the client with both a personality trait *and* its opposite." ("I would say that on the whole you can be rather a quiet, self effacing type, but when the circumstances are right, you can be quite the life and soul of the party if the mood strikes you.") The Jacques Statement,

"There are a lot of things you can do to fill your time, Ma. Have you thought about a hobby or an addiction?"

named for the character in "As You Like It" who gives the Seven Ages of Man speech, tailors the prediction to the age of the subject. To someone in his late thirties or early forties, for example, the psychic says, "If you are honest about it, you often get to wondering what happened to all those dreams you had when you were younger." There is the Barnum Statement, the assertion so general that anyone would agree, and the Fuzzy Fact, the seemingly factual statement couched in a way that "leaves plenty of scope to be developed into something more specific." ("I can see a connection with Europe, possibly Britain, or it could be the warmer, Mediterranean part?") And that's only the start: there is the Greener Grass technique, the Diverted Question, the Russian Doll, Sugar Lumps, not to mention Forking and the Good Chance Guess—all of which, when put together in skillful combination, can convince even the most skeptical observer that he or she is in the presence of real insight.

"Moving on to career matters, you don't work with children, do you?" Rowland will ask his subjects, in an example of what he dubs the "Vanishing Negative."

No, I don't.

"No, I thought not. That's not really your role."

Of course, if the subject answers differently, there's another way to play the question: "Moving on to career matters, you don't work with children, do you?"

I do, actually, part time.

"Yes, I thought so."

After Alison had analyzed the rooftop-killer profile, he decided to play a version of the cold-reading game. He gave the details of the crime, the profile prepared by the F.B.I., and a description of the offender to a group of senior police officers and forensic professionals in England. How did they find the profile? Highly accurate. Then Alison gave the same packet of case materials to another group of police officers, but this time he invented an imaginary offender, one who was altogether different from Calabro. The new killer was thirty-seven years old. He was an alcoholic. He had recently been laid off from his job with the water board, and had met the victim before on one of his rounds. What's more, Alison claimed, he had a history of violent relationships with women, and prior convictions for assault and burglary. How accurate did a group of experienced police officers find the F.B.I.'s profile when it was matched with the phony offender? Every bit as accurate as when it was matched to the real offender.

James Brussel didn't really see the Mad Bomber in that pile of pictures and photostats, then. That was an illusion. As the literary scholar Donald Foster pointed out in his 2000 book "Author Unknown," Brussel cleaned up his predictions for his memoirs. He actually told the police to look for the bomber in White Plains, sending the N.Y.P.D.'s bomb unit on a wild goose chase in Westchester County, sifting through local records. Brussel also told the police to look for a man with a facial scar, which Metesky didn't have. He told them to look for a man with a night job, and Metesky had been largely unemployed since leaving Con Edison in 1931. He told them to look for someone between forty and fifty, and Metesky was over fifty. He told them to look for someone who was an "expert in civil or military ordnance" and the closest Metesky came to that was a brief stint in a machine shop. And Brussel, despite what he wrote in his memoir, never said that the Bomber would be a Slav. He actually told the police to look for a man "born and educated in Germany," a prediction so far off the mark that the Mad Bomber himself was moved to object. At the height of the police investigation, when the New York *Journal American* offered to print any communications from the Mad Bomber, Metesky wrote in huffily to say that "the nearest to my being 'Teutonic' is that my father boarded a liner in Hamburg for passage to this country—about sixty-five years ago."

The true hero of the case wasn't Brussel; it was a woman named Alice Kelly, who had been assigned to go through Con Edison's personnel files. In January, 1957, she ran across an employee complaint from the early nineteen-thirties: a generator wiper at the Hell Gate plant had been knocked down by a backdraft of hot gases. The worker said that he was injured. The company said that he wasn't. And in the flood of angry letters from the ex-employee Kelly spotted a threat—to "take justice in my own hands"—that had appeared in one of the Mad Bomber's letters. The name on the file was George Metesky.

Brussel did not really understand the mind of the Mad Bomber. He seems to have understood only that, if you make a great number of predictions, the ones that were wrong will soon be forgotten, and the ones that turn out to be true will make you famous. The Hedunit is not a triumph of forensic analysis. It's a party trick.

"Here's where I'm at with this guy," Douglas said, kicking off the profiling session with which "Inside the Mind of BTK" begins. It was 1984. The killer was still at large. Douglas, Hazelwood, and Walker and the two detectives from Wichita were all seated around the oak table. Douglas took off his suit jacket and draped it over his chair. "Back when he started in 1974, he was in his mid-to-late twenties," Douglas began. "It's now ten years later, so that would put him in his mid-to-late thirties."

It was Walker's turn: BTK had never engaged in any sexual penetration. That suggested to him someone with an "inadequate, immature sexual history." He would have a "lone-wolf type of personality. But he's not alone because he's shunned by others—it's because he chooses to be alone.... He can function in social settings, but only on the surface. He may have women friends he can talk to, but he'd feel very inadequate with a peer-group female." Hazelwood was next. BTK would be "heavily into masturbation." He went on, "Women who have had sex with this guy would describe him as aloof, uninvolved, the type who is more interested in her servicing him than the other way around."

Douglas followed his lead. "The women he's been with are either many years younger, very naïve, or much older and depend on him as their meal ticket," he ventured. What's more, the profilers determined, BTK would drive a "decent" automobile, but it would be "nondescript."

At this point, the insights began piling on. Douglas said he'd been thinking that BTK was married. But now maybe he was thinking he was divorced. He speculated that BTK was lower middle class, probably living in a rental. Walker felt BTK was in a "lower-paying white collar job, as opposed to blue collar." Hazelwood saw him as "middle class" and "articulate." The consensus was that his I.Q. was somewhere between 105 and 145. Douglas wondered whether he was connected with the military. Hazelwood called him a "now" person, who needed "instant gratification."

Walker said that those who knew him "might say they remember him, but didn't really know much about him." Douglas then had a flash—"It was a sense, almost a knowing"—and said, "I wouldn't be surprised if, in the job he's in today, that he's wearing some sort of uniform. . . . This guy isn't mental. But he is crazy like a fox."

They had been at it for almost six hours. The best minds in the F.B.I. had given the Wichita detectives a blueprint for their investigation. Look for an American male with a possible connection to the military. His I.Q. will be above 105. He will like to masturbate, and will be aloof and selfish in bed. He will drive a decent car. He will be a "now" person. He won't be comfortable with women. But he may have women friends. He will be a lone wolf. But he will be able to function in social settings. He won't be unmemorable. But he will be unknowable. He will be either never married, divorced, or married, and if he was or is married his wife will be younger or older. He may or may not live in a rental, and might be lower class, upper lower class, lower middle class or middle class. And he will be crazy like a fox, as opposed to being mental. If you're keeping score, that's a Jacques Statement, two Barnum Statements, four Rainbow Ruses, a Good Chance Guess, two predictions that aren't really predictions because they could never be verified—and nothing even close to the salient fact that BTK was a pillar of his community, the president of his church and the married father of two.

"This thing is solvable," Douglas told the detectives, as he stood up and put on his jacket. "Feel free to pick up the phone and call us if we can be of any further assistance." You can imagine him taking the time for an encouraging smile and a slap on the back. "You're gonna nail this guy." ◆

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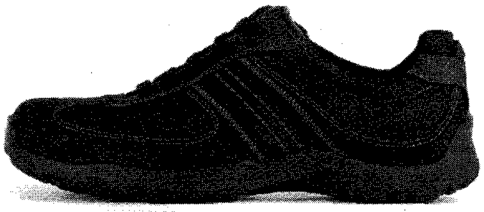

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ANNALS OF ECOLOGY

UNCONVENTIONAL CRUDE

Canada's synthetic-fuels boom.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

The town of Fort McMurray occupies a set of irregularly spaced hillsides on either side of the Athabasca River, in northern Alberta. It has a dozen check-cashing joints, a roughly equal number of hotels, and a gaming center called the Boomtown Casino. It also has a museum, which is devoted to the region's most important resource, the Alberta tar sands. Exhibits include an eight-foot-long rotor, half of a hundred-and-fifty-ton truck, and a pump of Brobdingnagian proportions. Near the entrance to the museum sits a black mound covered by a clear plastic dome. A sign invites visitors to scratch around in the mound with a little retractable rake, then lift up a flap and take a sniff. Tar sands look like dirt and smell like diesel fuel.

The tar sands begin near the border of Saskatchewan, around the latitude of Edmonton, and extend, in three major deposits, north and west almost to British Columbia. All in all, they cover—or, more accurately, underlie—some fifty-seven thousand square miles, an area roughly the size of Florida. It is believed that they were pushed into their present location seventy million years ago by the uplift of the Rocky Mountains.

For the most part, the tar sands consist of quartzite, clay, and water. The other ingredient—the "tar"—is a mixture of very heavy hydrocarbons known as bitumen. Bitumen can be used as a sealant—supposedly the word "mummy" is derived from the term in ancient Persian—and as a paving material. With the right technology, it can also be converted into a form of petroleum known as synthetic crude.

There are two ways to assess the world's oil supply. One is to consider only conventional reserves—the sort of oil that comes gushing out of the ground. Estimates of conventional reserves vary widely, but most analyses suggest that their output will begin to decline sometime in the next few decades (if it hasn't already)—a development that so-called "peak oilers" predict will lead to a variety of gruesome consequences, including blackouts, food shortages, and general economic collapse. The second way is to look beyond conventional reserves to unconventional ones, like the tar sands.

Suncor's Millennium Mine. The shift to new sources of oil could significantly increase greenhouse-gas emissions.

JIRI REZAC/POLARIS

It is estimated that there is enough bitumen in Alberta to yield 1.7 trillion barrels of synthetic crude. Assuming that only ten per cent of this is actually recoverable, it still represents the second-largest oil reserve in the world, after Saudi Arabia's, and more oil than is contained in the reserves of Kuwait, Norway, and Russia put together. Unconventional crude can be found in many other parts of the globe besides Canada; these include eastern Venezuela, which is home to a huge tar-sandslike deposit called the Faja Petrolífera del Orinoco, and portions of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, where there's a thick layer of oil shale known as the Green River Formation. Even coal can be converted into liquid fuel. During the Second World War, the Nazis employed a technique called the Fischer-Tropsch process; the same process is now in use in several countries, most notably South Africa, which invested heavily in coal-to-liquids technology during the apartheid era. Build enough coal-to-liquids plants and places like Montana and West Virginia could one day become major petroleum producers.

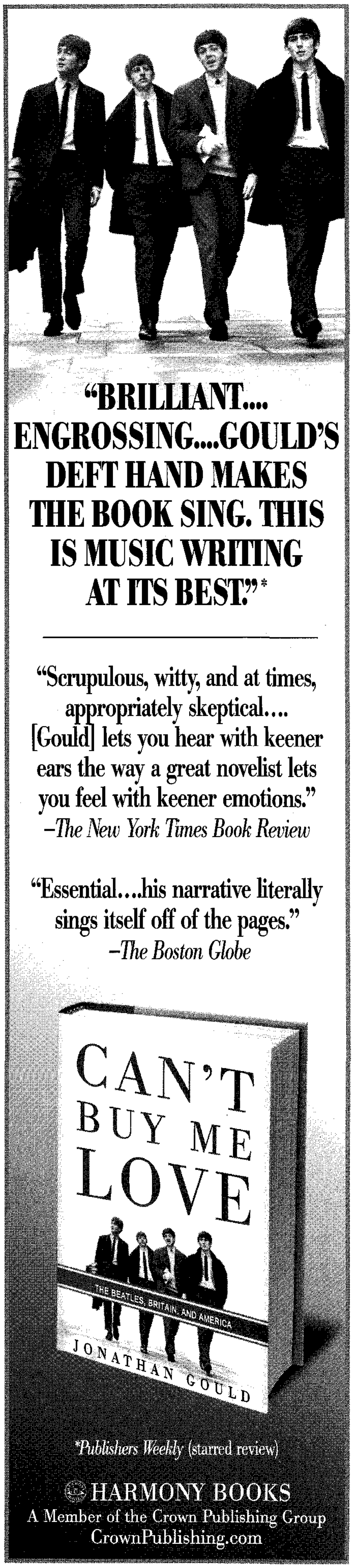
In Fort McMurray, what might be called the world's first unconventional oil boom is already under way. Since 2002, Shell, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, and Imperial Oil, which is primarily owned by ExxonMobil, have all received approval to construct major projects in the tar sands; Total has announced its intention to follow suit. Over the next five years, investment in the Fort McMurray area is expected to amount to more than seventy-five billion dollars. Residents of the town have taken to calling it Fort McMoney.

Thanks in large part to what's happening in the tar sands—output now tops a million barrels a day—Canada has become America's No. 1 source of imported oil; the country supplies the United States with more petroleum than all of the nations of the Persian Gulf combined. (If you have bought gas recently in Colorado, Ohio, or Indiana—states where tar-sands oil is refined—you are probably driving around with a piece of northern Alberta in your tank.) By 2010, the tar sands' yield is expected to double, and by 2015 to triple. Crude from the tar sands and other unconventional sources could keep oil flowing well into the middle of the century, and perhaps beyond. Depending on how you look at things, this is either a heartening prospect or a terrifying one.

The company that has been producing oil from the tar sands the longest is known as Suncor. (Suncor used to be a part of Sun Oil, now Sunoco, but today it is owned and operated independently.) One day this summer, I went to take a tour of its operations, which sprawl across several hundred square miles. I was picked up at the entrance to the site by a grandmotherly guide named Gloria Jackson, and together we went to fetch another Suncor official, named Darin Zandee. "There's no blasts today, so that's good," Zandee said, referring to the charges that are periodically set off to loosen the sands. We drove up to a lookout, from which we could see, spread before us, Suncor's newest mine, the Millennium. Rings of jet-black earthworks were scattered across an enormous pit, an arrangement that might have been based on a blueprint from the Inferno.

The Millennium Mine opened in 2002. Suncor expects to continue to pull tar sands out of it for the next twenty-five years. By then the pit, which is now roughly two miles in diameter, will be six miles across. We drove over the edge of the mine and slowly made our way down to the bottom. There a huge, Mike Mulligan-esque shovel was standing idle. Its bucket hung in midair, steel teeth glinting. Zandee said that to lift one of the teeth would require thirty men—"That gives you a sense of the scale." A gargantuan truck rumbled by. Zandee estimated that it was carrying about three hundred tons. "That's some of our smaller equipment," he said. The largest truck in the mine—the Caterpillar 797B—can haul more than four hundred tons. It has twelve-foot-tall tires, and its cab sits twenty-one feet off the ground. Driving one, I was told, is like trying to steer a house while peering out the window of the upstairs bathroom.

At the Millennium, the tar sands start at a depth of roughly a hundred feet and extend down in a more or less continuous layer, known as the "feed," for about a hundred and fifty feet. Before mining begins, everything above the feed—trees, bushes, grass, soil, rocks, wildlife—gets scooped up and carted away. (The material is delicately referred to as "overburden.") Below the tar sands, there's a thick layer of limestone, the remains of an ancient ocean that once covered Alberta. Suncor mines some of the limestone, too, and uses it to shore up the roads in the pit. What with the overburden and the tar sands and the limestone, Zandee said, "We try to move a million tons a day." He pointed out a truck in the distance that was dumping a load of tar sands onto what looked like a large platform. The platform was actually a grate, through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which the sands were being fed into a giant tank of hot water.

In any given load of sands, only about ten per cent is bitumen; to produce synthetic crude, the other ninety per cent has to be separated out. In the hot-water tank, the sands get spun around; the liberated bitumen is then siphoned off. For every barrel of synthetic crude that Suncor eventually produces, forty-five hundred pounds of tar sands have to be dug up and separated.

We made our way out of the pit and headed on, following the bitumen to its next stop, the upgrader. Along the way, we passed a murky expanse of water with oily scum on the surface. A few dozen scarecrow-like creatures, fixed to empty barrels, were bobbing on top. This, Gloria Jackson explained, was a tailings pond; it held water that had been used in the separation process and was too contaminated with mercury and other toxins to be released back into the Athabasca. (Suncor has nine such ponds, which collectively cover an area of eleven square miles.) The scarecrows, known as "bitu-men," were supposed to discourage birds from landing on the pond and poisoning themselves. Every minute or so, a dull boom filled the air. This was the sound of a propane cannon, another bird-intimidation device.

The primary difference between bitumen and ordinary crude is the size of the hydrocarbon molecules: in liquid oil, these molecules contain between five and twenty carbon atoms, while in bitumen they contain more than twenty. (At room temperature, pure bitumen is so viscous that it will not flow.) The main job of the upgrader is to break down the oversized hydrocarbons into smaller units. We drove along roads with names like Sulphur Street and Diesel Alley and pulled up to a huge refinery-like complex that covered several square blocks. There were dozens of smokestacks and tanks, and more pipes than could possibly be counted. Jackson explained that somewhere inside this maze the bitumen would be "cracked," at a temperature of nearly nine hundred degrees. After that, in the form of synthetic crude, it would be piped to specially outfitted refineries, either in the United States or Canada, to be converted largely into transportation fuels—gasoline for cars, diesel for trucks, and jet fuel for planes. (Suncor owns a refinery near Denver that processes tar-sands oil.) I had told Jackson that I had twin boys at home, and at the end of the tour she handed me two yellow Matchbox-size versions of the 797B.

American accounts usually give the start of the oil age as 1859, the year that a former railroad conductor named Edwin L. Drake drilled his first successful well, near Titusville, Pennsylvania. Canadian accounts go back a year earlier, to 1858, when a businessman named James Miller Williams decided to dig a well for drinking water outside the town of Bear Creek, Ontario. Instead of water, he struck oil.

Efforts to extract oil from the tar sands soon followed. Entrepreneurs and con men sunk dozens of wells around Fort McMurray in the second half of the nineteenth century. (One enterprising German immigrant who claimed to have struck oil apparently poured the stuff down the hole himself.) Eventually, it became clear that there was no oil, and attention turned to mining the bitumen. In 1930, a former farmer named Robert Fitzsimmons set up the first commercial separation plant in the tar sands; in 1938, Fitzsimmons had to flee Canada to avoid his creditors.

In 1956, an American geologist, Manley Natland, came up with the idea of streamlining the process by using atom bombs. Natland reasoned that "thermal devices" could be lowered into the limestone beneath the tar sands and exploded. This would create cavities into which the bitumen, heated to more than a thousand degrees, would flow and from which it could then be collected. The idea was taken seriously at the highest levels in both Ottawa and Washington—the United States Atomic Energy Commission even agreed to supply a bomb to test Natland's theory—but it was never implemented. (Beginning in the mid-nineteen-sixties, the Soviet Union actually tried the experiment, setting off half a dozen nuclear explosions to stimulate conventional oil production; production increased, but, unfortunately, much of the oil turned out to be radioactive.)

The technology for removing bitumen from the tar sands is probably still best described as a work in progress. Where the feed lies closest to the surface, as, for example, at the Suncor site, the bitumen is strip-mined and then separated. But most of the tar sands lie too deep to be mined profitably. In these zones, a method known as in-situ extraction is used. In-situ extraction is based on much the same principle as Natland's scheme, minus the atom bombs. Typically, two horizontal wells are drilled into the sands, one above the other. High-pressure steam is injected into the top well; eventually, the tar sands grow hot enough—nearly four hundred degrees—that bitumen begins to flow into the bottom well. The technical name for this process is Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage, or SAGD (pronounced "sag-dee").

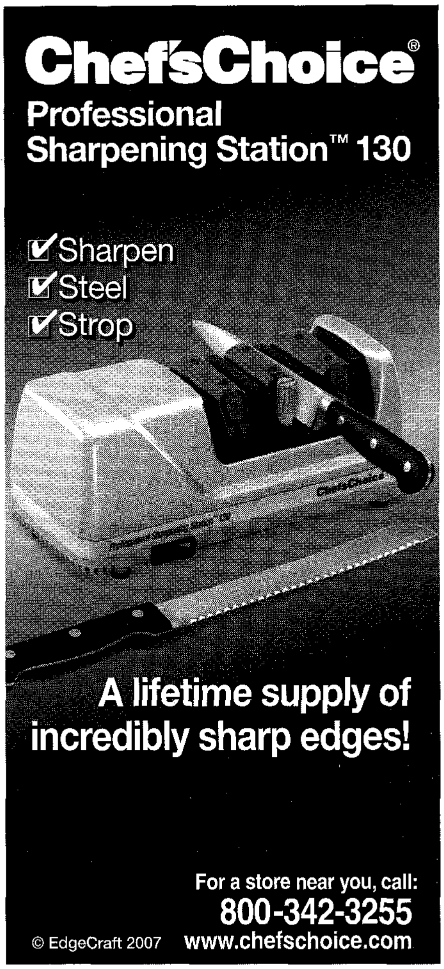
Whichever method is used, a great deal of energy is required. To produce a barrel of synthetic crude through mining takes roughly eight hundred and ten megajoules, which is the energy content of about an eighth of a barrel of oil. To produce a barrel of synthetic crude through SAGD takes more than sixteen hundred megajoules, which is the energy content of more than a quarter of a barrel of oil. This means that, for every three barrels extracted via SAGD, one has, in effect, been consumed.

Tar-sands oil itself could, in principle, be used to power the operations; in fact, most of the energy used to generate the steam for SAGD, as well as to run all the upgraders and separators, now comes from natural gas. It is estimated that by 2012 tar-sands operations will consume two billion cubic feet of natural gas a day, or enough to heat all the homes in Canada. Such is the demand for natural gas around Fort McMurray that a consortium of companies, including Shell Canada and Imperial Oil, has proposed building a seven-hundred-and-fifty-mile pipeline from the Arctic Ocean through the largely undisturbed wilderness of the Mackenzie River Valley and down into northern Alberta. The proposal, which has been challenged by native and environmental groups, has yet to receive regulatory approval; meanwhile, a variety of other plans have been floated. As it happens, while I was visiting Fort McMurray a company called the Energy Alberta Corporation filed an application to build a pair of nuclear reactors four hundred miles west of town. Early reports stated that the company already had a "large industrial off-taker" lined up to buy nearly three-quarters of the twenty-two hundred megawatts that the reactors would generate. Energy Alberta would not disclose the identity of this "off-taker"; in the local press it seemed to be taken for granted that the power would be going to the tar sands.

There are several reasons that companies like Chevron and ExxonMobil are now rushing to develop the tar sands, the most obvious being that it's increasingly profitable to do so. Converting the sands into synthetic crude costs around thirty dollars a barrel; last week, the price of a barrel of oil on the New York Mercantile Exchange was over ninety dollars. Other synthetic fuels require more elaborate processing, and are commensurately more costly to produce; converting coal into oil, for example, requires gasifying the coal under intense pressure and heat, then condensing it into a liquid. To extract oil from shale, meanwhile, involves basically rewriting geological history. (Shell has been experimenting with a process that involves baking the shale with electric heaters until it reaches a temperature of nearly seven hundred degrees while, at the same time, freezing the area around it.) If the price of oil remains above ninety dollars—many analysts expect it to hit a hundred dollars a barrel soon—then these and other unconventional forms of fuel can also be developed at a profit, and, all other things being equal, they will be.

No matter how it is carried out, oil extraction is a destructive business. Conventional oil wells require pipelines and drill pads and roads for heavy equipment; all of these fragment (or destroy) the landscape. The flaring of natural gas, which often accompanies oil production, produces an array of air pollutants, and leaks and spills release toxins ranging from volatile chemicals, like benzene (a known carcinogen), to much heavier compounds, like benzopyrene (another known carcinogen). With unconventional oil, the damage tends to be higher all around—more land gets disturbed, more pollutants are produced, and more opportunities arise for contamination. And then there are the greenhouse gases.

Alex Farrell is a professor in the Energy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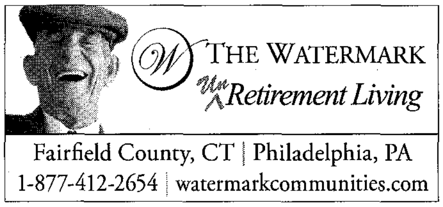
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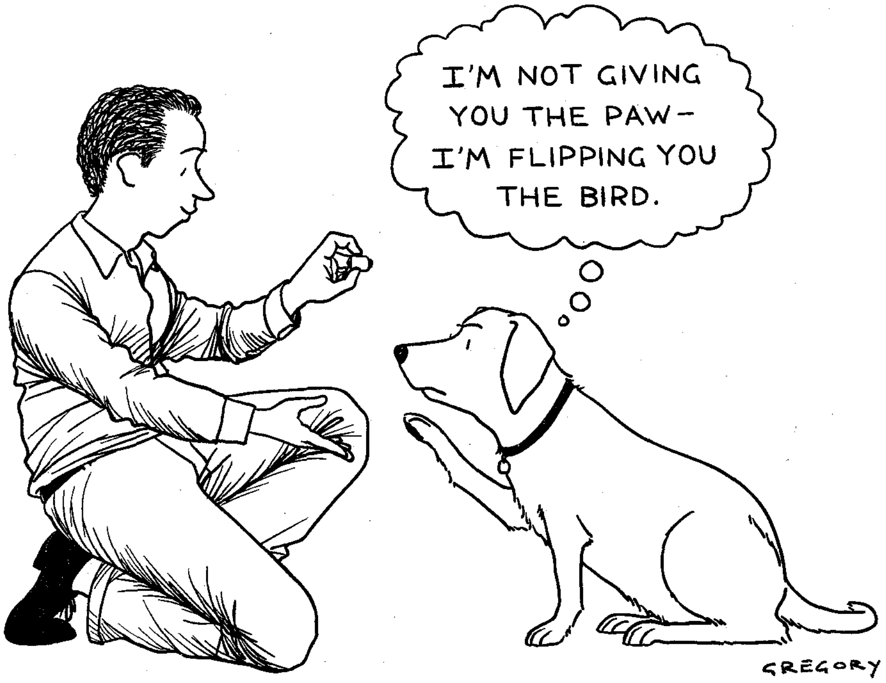
I'M NOT GIVING YOU THE PAW—I'M FLIPPING YOU THE BIRD.
GREGORY

and Resources Group at the University of California at Berkeley who studies the impacts of unconventional oil. A few years ago, Farrell realized that all the major climate models were based on the same faulty premise: they assumed that in the future increased oil demand would be met with increased supplies of conventional crude. Together with a graduate student named Adam Brandt, Farrell decided to try to come up with projections that more accurately reflected reality. For their calculations, the two assumed that where there was a gap between demand and conventional supply it would be filled with synthetic fuels, first with tar-sands oil and later with oil from coal and shale. (According to high-end estimates, coal and oil shale could together yield some ten trillion barrels of unconventional crude.) They then calculated what the impact would be on global carbon-dioxide levels.

"All unconventional forms of oil are worse for greenhouse-gas emissions than petroleum," Farrell told me. "And it's pretty easy to understand why. It's not so hard to turn liquid petroleum into liquid fuels. Turning a solid material like coal into a liquid—it sounds hard to do, and it *is* hard to do. And that extra effort shows up in higher energy consumption and higher water use and higher emissions." In the case of tar-sands oil, total greenhouse-gas emissions per barrel—which is to say, the carbon dioxide produced in creating the oil and then burning it—are between fifteen and forty per cent higher than those from conventional oil. In the case of coal-to-liquids, or C.T.L., total emissions are almost two times as high as with conventional oil, and for oil shale they can be more than twice as high.

"Let's take coal-to-liquids," Farrell said. "You're talking about nearly doubling the greenhouse-gas emissions. Think about this—we're talking about a world in which over-all greenhouse-gas emissions should start to go down, and this is a technology that doubles emissions. They don't go together too well, do they?" Farrell and Brandt found that the shift to unconventional oil could add somewhere between fifty and four hundred gigatons of carbon to the atmosphere by 2100.

"The environment and climate change are what are called 'externalities,' " Farrell continued. "And at the moment we don't have effective ways of including these externalities in market transactions of any sort. Until we do, the market won't solve them, since by definition they're external to the market. They're a social good—government has to step up and say, 'We're going to take this into account.' "

One way that a government could take greenhouse-gas emissions into account would be to tax them. This would encourage producers of unconventional fuels to cut their emissions, by, for example, employing "carbon capture and storage" technologies. Ideally, it would also prompt entrepreneurs to develop alternatives to oil, like biofuels. Many analyses, though, suggest that, to have an appreciable effect on the oil sector, carbon taxes would have to be quite high—in the neighborhood of two dollars on a gallon of gasoline—precisely because today there are no readily available substitutes for gas or diesel or jet fuel. Farrell favors federal fuel standards, which would function somewhat like vehicle-efficiency standards, requiring oil companies to achieve a certain emissions target across all the products that they sell. (This target could be adjusted over time, much as auto-efficiency standards were ratcheted up during the seventies and eighties.) California is now in the process of drawing up such a plan—the California Low Carbon Fuel Standard is supposed to take effect on January 1, 2010—and several bills have been introduced in Congress that would impose such standards nationally.

At the same time, there is a great deal of support in Washington for measures that would, in effect, subsidize high-carbon fuels. One such measure, the Coal-to-Liquid Fuel Promotion Act, introduced earlier this year by Senators Jim Bunning, of Kentucky, and Barack Obama, of Illinois, would encourage companies to invest in C.T.L. plants by providing tax incentives and federal loan guarantees. (Although C.T.L. would be profitable at today's oil prices, building the plants requires large capital investments, which are considered risky as long as there's a chance that oil prices will fall.)

"If companies could lay off the risk of oil prices dropping below forty dollars a barrel, there would be enormous investment in this," Farrell told me. "But, when policies are proposed to promote C.T.L., I think the question to ask is, Is this an industry we want to start now?"

The Athabasca River flows north, into Lake Athabasca, which spans the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. In the winter, it is possible to drive the hundred and fifty miles from Fort McMurray to the lake on an ice road. (Because of rising temperatures, the number of days that the road is passable has been steadily shrinking.) In the summer, the only way to make the trip is by boat or by prop plane. One day when I was visiting Alberta, I flew up to a village on the edge of the lake, Fort Chipewyan, in a six-seat Cessna. As the plane gained altitude, I could see the vast black pits of the tar-sands mines that surround Fort McMurray. Farther north, the pits gave way to regularly spaced square-shaped clearings in the trees—signs of preparation for in-situ operations. Finally, these, too, gave way, and below was nothing but the wild green of the boreal forest. (Spread over 1.4 billion acres, Canada's boreal forest is considered one of the largest still intact ecosystems on the planet.)

Fort Chipewyan, which was founded in the seventeen-eighties as a trading post, is a native village; about half its twelve hundred or so residents are Mikisew Cree, and the other half are Athabasca Chipewyan. It has a few hundred houses, a post office, and two churches—one Anglican and one Catholic—both perched near the edge of the lake. To a certain extent, Fort Chip, as it is known locally, has shared in the tar-sands boom; many residents of the village work construction jobs in Fort McMurray and return home only on their days off. At the same time, there's a good deal of concern in the village about what is happening. A peculiarly high number of cases of a rare cancer have been reported in town; this has prompted speculation that toxins from the tailings ponds are working their way downriver into the lake, which provides the village with drinking water as well as with staples like whitefish and pike. Meanwhile, both the Chipewyan and the Cree consider many of the tracts that the Alberta government has leased to oil companies to be their ancestral lands. The week before I visited Fort Chip, there was a rally at the local community center, calling for a moratorium on new projects.

"It's sad to see this thing destroyed, you know," Ray Ladouceur, a fisherman I met, said. We were standing by the lake, which is more than two hundred miles long. It was a still afternoon, and billowy white clouds were reflected in the water. "A lot of the fish are getting—I might as well say it—scabby.

"I don't know what we have to do to try to prevent them from destroying any more," he said, referring to the oil companies. "They try to say they can clean it. There's no way. It'll take a thousand years before it flushes itself out, and I think I'll be too damn old for that."

Over the past year or so, opposition to new tar-sands projects has been steadily growing. Around Fort McMurray, the emphasis is on local impacts; town officials have fought recent expansion proposals by several oil companies on the ground that there's already a shortage of housing and hospital beds in the area. In the rest of Canada, the focus is on the destruction of the boreal forest and the implications for the climate. Canada, in contrast to the United States, was an early signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, but it will be all but impossible for the country to meet its CO_2-reduction goals, in part because of the tar sands. (A recent Toronto *Globe & Mail* op-ed piece on emissions from the sands was titled "The Gassy Elephant in Our Living Room.") The former Canadian Environment Minister Charles Caccia has compared the country's position on greenhouse gases—pledging to reduce emissions on the one hand while increasing tar-sands production on the other—to "attempting to ride two horses galloping in opposite directions."

Meanwhile, development in northern Alberta continues unabated. All the applications opposed by Fort McMurray officials were ultimately approved, and just a few months ago an American company, Hyperion Resources, announced plans to build the first new oil refinery in this country in thirty years, to handle increasing volumes of tar-sands crude. Stéphane Dion, the leader of Canada's Liberal Party (which is currently out of power), has said, "There is no environmental minister on earth who can stop the oil from coming out of the sand, because the money is too big."

When I first landed at Fort Chip's tiny airport, the place was deserted. When I returned there for the flight back, I found a few dozen people standing on the tarmac. The crowd, I was told, was waiting for a corpse; a village elder had died the previous day in a hospital in Fort McMurray, and his body was being brought home. Everyone was quiet as the casket was carried out of the plane and then loaded onto the back of a pickup truck. As soon as the crowd dispersed, I and three other passengers climbed into the Cessna, and two minutes later we took off. Below was the wilderness, then the perfectly square clearings in the trees, and, finally, as we headed into Fort McMurray, the vast pits and the black ponds, with the bitu-men bobbing on top. ♦

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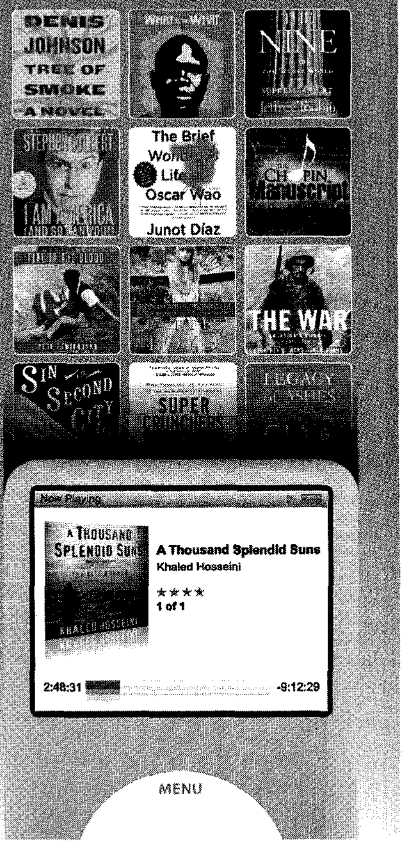

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ROUGH RIDER

Where will Sam Zell take the struggling Tribune Company?

BY CONNIE BRUCK

In April, 2005, Sam Zell travelled to Abu Dhabi to meet Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan. Zell is best known as a real-estate magnate, whose reputation has been enhanced by the sale, last February, for thirty-nine billion dollars, of Equity Office Properties Trust, the largest collection of office buildings in the country. Zell, who is sixty-six, delights in claiming that at the time the sale—to Blackstone, the private-equity firm—was "the largest single transaction that has ever been done." But for decades his appetite for economic opportunity has lured him beyond real estate into investments in oil and gas, barges, insurance, wineries, cruise ships, department stores, waste-to-energy power projects, and radio stations. In April, he signed an $8.2-billion deal that would effectively give him control of Tribune Company, the giant media conglomerate, whose assets include the Chicago *Tribune* and the Los Angeles *Times*. For about a dozen years, he has also invested aggressively abroad, most recently in the Middle East. He spends about twelve hundred hours a year on his plane—the equivalent of flying from New York to London every few days. "I want to see everybody in their habitat," he told me, in a low, rasping voice. "When these people see me come halfway around the world to meet them and spend time with them, it creates a level of confidence that translates into other things"—by which he means, he says, "successful business."

A lawyer friend of Zell's, who had established a relationship with the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, suggested to Zell that he get to know them; he promptly arranged a trip. During a dinner at Sheikh Mohammed's palace, the men got along well. The Sheikh's father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, who for more than three decades, until his death, in 2004, was the President of the United Arab Emirates, was known for his diplomatic talents and his generosity. He directed billions of dollars in aid to forty poorer countries, a beneficence made possible by the discovery, in the nineteen-fifties, off the shores of Abu Dhabi, of one of the world's largest crude reserves. *Fortune* recently described the city of Abu Dhabi as the richest in the world, reporting that its four hundred and twenty thousand citizens are worth about seventeen million dollars each. Sheikh Mohammed is determined to strengthen the emirate's ties to the West. He and Zell spoke for two hours about business and world affairs, and, finally, about more personal topics. Zell described annual motorcycle trips that he takes with an eclectic group of friends he calls "Zell's Angels," to Italy, Switzerland, Corsica, Sardinia—wherever the scenery is breathtaking and the roads vertiginous. "I understand that you ride motorcycles," he told the Sheikh. "I'd love to go for a ride with you."

"How about tomorrow night?" the Sheikh replied.

At eleven o'clock the next evening, the men, wearing jeans and helmets, mounted a pair of motorcycles and raced along Abu Dhabi's tree-lined boulevards.

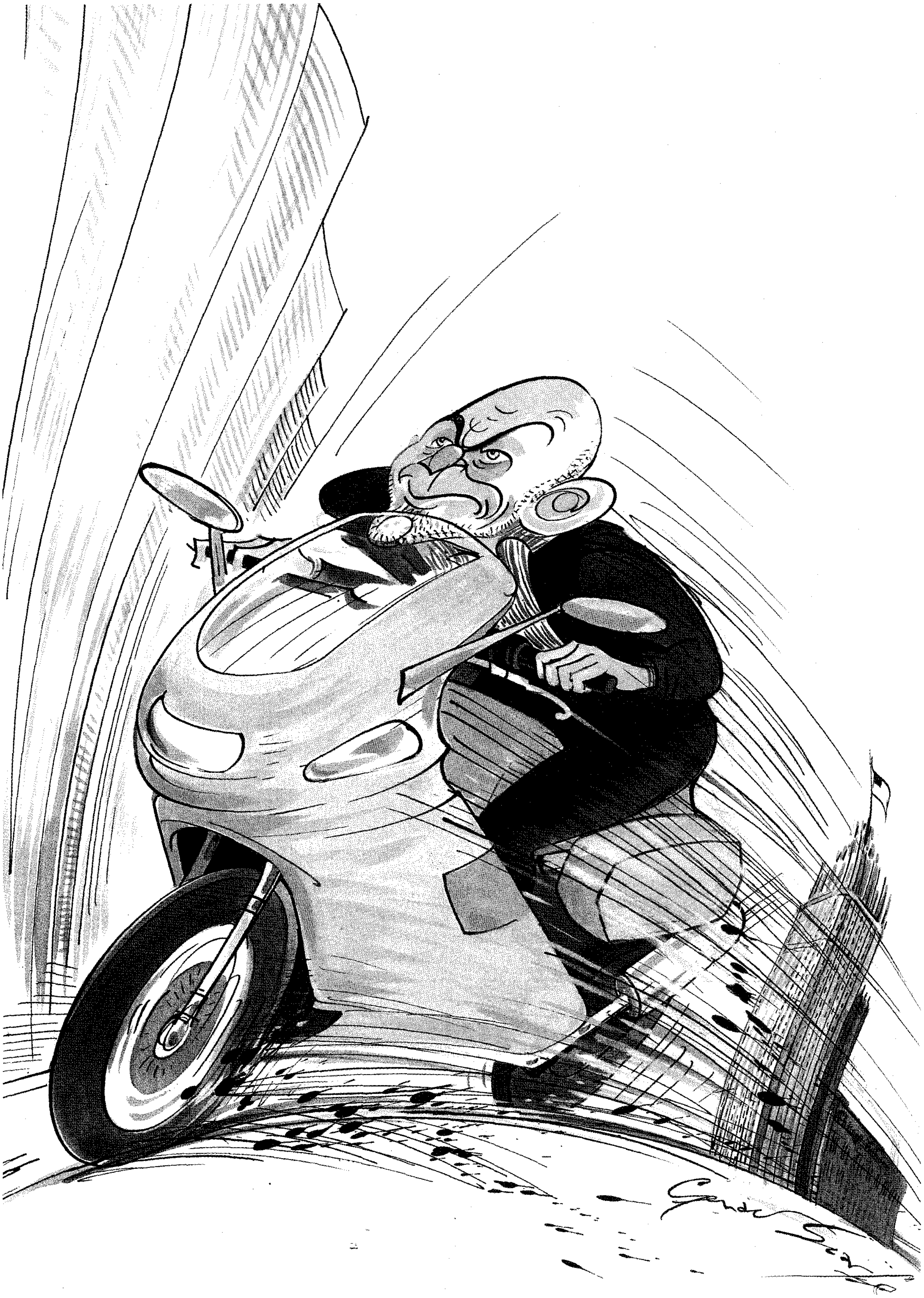
That day, Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon al-Nahyan, who is the chairman of the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, had invited Zell to see a model of a planned development of an island being created just off the coast, in the Persian Gulf. The neighboring emirate of Dubai has become famous for its devotion to the superlative: it has one of the world's largest indoor ski slopes, and is constructing the world's tallest building and largest shopping mall. Abu Dhabi, with far greater oil reserves and a more conservative, religious population, has proceeded more deliberately. Sheikh Tahnoon was eager to hear what Zell thought of his development plans. Accompanied by a small entourage, the two men drove to a hotel and entered a conference room dominated by a model so vast that it nearly filled the space. Sheikh Tahnoon led Zell around the structure, pointing to office towers, malls, hotels, schools, hospitals, apartment buildings, and houses. The towers would be built first, he explained. Zell listened intently, scrutinizing the model. Finally, he spoke. "Pardon me, Your Highness, but I have a reputation for being direct," he said. "This makes no sense!"

Zell told the Sheikh that his planners had it all wrong. They should start by building the kind of housing, schools, and shopping centers that would make people want to live on the island. Office towers should be built only after it had been populated. Zell warned the Sheikh not to be influenced by the grand ambitions of his architects—not to build a skyline in advance of demand. Sheikh Tahnoon said that he thought Zell might be right. At Zell's direction, a construction manager began to move pieces of the model around, and an assistant to the Sheikh took notes.

Zell has since returned to Abu Dhabi many times. "We've invited the ruling family to be investors in our portfolio of companies, and they've invited us to explore homebuilding with them in Abu Dhabi and neighboring countries," said Gary Garrabrant, who is the C.E.O. of Equity International, a private-equity company owned by Zell which invests in real-estate-related businesses outside the United States. "They are taken with Sam because, I think, he speaks candidly to them and doesn't necessarily affirm their view." Zell's lack of inhibition has proved disarming in other ways, too. On one trip to Abu Dhabi, Zell and a colleague were at their hotel, preparing to see Sheikh Mohammed, when two dishdashas were delivered to their rooms as a gift. "Let's wear them!" Zell exclaimed. Their hosts laughed uproariously at the sight of the two Jews in flowing Arab robes.

Zell, who was raised in an Orthodox household and is a supporter of Israel, says that his religion has never been an issue in

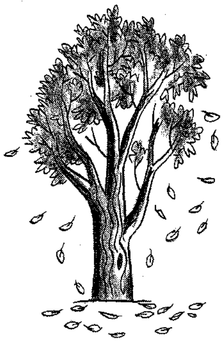
GERALD SCARFE


Gerald Scarfe

Zell is famous for his bluntness. "The way I look at transactions, and the way I look at risk, I have no room for sentiment," he says.

Abu Dhabi or in other Arab countries. "In no way, shape, or form do I hide the fact that I believe in Israel—open kimono!" he declared, using one of his favorite expressions to somewhat bizarre effect. But, he continued, "from the beginning of civilization Muslim rulers had Jewish advisers. I think it is actually a plus."

Zell has made much of his fortune by identifying opportunity where others see only trouble. He says that he is constantly trying to "shut out the noise" of conventional wisdom, because, although it may not always be wrong, it is rarely profitable. In the mid-seventies, he bought about three billion dollars' worth of distressed real estate in cities across the country for "a dollar down and a hope certificate." He made hundreds of millions of dollars. In 1978, he published an article about his exploits in *Real Estate Review*, which he titled "The Grave Dancer" ("I was dancing on the skeletons of other people's mistakes"), and this became his nickname. If Zell gains control of Tribune Company—the deal is expected to close before the end of the year, though obstacles remain—it will be the biggest distressed entity that he has ever acquired. In addition to the Chicago and Los Angeles daily newspapers, the company owns *Newsday*, six other dailies, and twenty-three television stations, as well as the Chicago Cubs. In part because of rapidly declining profits in the newspaper industry, Tribune's revenues have been dropping for years. When Tribune's directors put the company up for sale, in September, 2006, a number of prospective buyers examined its assets and walked away. By the time Zell made his offer, last March, his only competition was a less fully formed bid from the Los Angeles businessmen Ronald Burkle and Eli Broad.



When some of Zell's friends heard about the deal, they were surprised that he wanted to enter the newspaper business—and at a moment when it is struggling to survive. One friend told me that he thought Zell may have been motivated, at least in part, by his love of Chicago, where he has lived all his life; a growing interest in cultural and civic affairs (his third wife, Helen, is the chairwoman of the board of trustees of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago); and a realization that he has made more money than he can ever spend. *Forbes* recently named him the wealthiest person in Chicago, with an estimated net worth of six billion dollars.

However, Maggie Wilderotter, who is the chairwoman and C.E.O. of Citizens Communications and has sat on the boards of three of Zell's firms, said that she had spoken with him many times about Tribune Company before he made his bid, and that high-minded considerations played no part in his thinking. "An important part of the Tribune portfolio is TV stations," Wilderotter said. "He's buying a media company that has assets other than newspapers." Burkle and Broad told Tribune's directors that they were eager to preserve the newspapers' public-service role, which they believed was increasingly jeopardized by owners who were focussed solely on profitability. The media mogul David Geffen, who offered Tribune two billion dollars for the L.A. *Times* in 2006, made a similar argument. "But that's not what drives Sam," Wilderotter said. "His thought process throughout this whole thing has always been about the business proposition. I never, ever heard Sam say, 'I'm doing this because I love the Chicago *Tribune*,' or 'I'm committed to the city of Chicago.' It would have been totally out of character."

In mid-July, I met with Zell in his office at Equity Group Investments, the private firm that is the core of his far-flung empire. The firm occupies an office tower in Chicago's West Loop which he and his partner, Robert Lurie, bought in 1975. The men had met in the early sixties, as undergraduates at the University of Michigan; Zell employed Lurie in a business that he had started, building and managing apartments that were rented to students. By the early nineteen-seventies, Lurie had joined Zell in his real-estate business in Chicago; the two were partners until Lurie's death, from cancer, in 1990, when he was forty-eight. "You could put the two of us in two different rooms, give us each a problem, and we would come up with the same answer—except using completely different methodologies," Zell said. "Mine was gut, his was formulaic. We'd finish each other's sentences."

"Sam was the rainmaker, and Bob was the one that took care of all the messes Sam made," Stuart Sloan, an investor and a friend of Zell's, said. He added that Lurie always carried in his pocket a list of the company's assets and liabilities. The men shared a commitment to finding clever ways to minimize taxes. "Sam and Bob said they could find better things to do with their money than the government would," Ann Lurie, Bob's widow, recalled. Lurie was as funny as Zell, and when they were together their interactions often took the form of a comic routine. They created myriad partnerships and delighted in giving them names like B/S Investments and FU Associates. Their height—Lurie was short, as is Zell—was a subject of ongoing mock competition. They drafted a partnership agreement, which said that, in the event of a dispute, "the taller one" would decide.

A large photograph of Lurie—with wild hair and a mustache, wearing tinted glasses and smoking a cigar—adorns a wall in the sitting area in Zell's office. French doors open onto a spacious wooden deck, inhabited by two pet ducks, where Zell likes to entertain guests when the weather is fine. On Zell's desk were photographs of his wife, Helen. The two had been friendly in college and met again about twelve years ago. (Helen, an English major, said that she was never interested in business. Shortly after she and Sam began seeing one another, he tried to buy Rockefeller Center. He didn't succeed, but, referring to the executives involved and the behind-the-scenes drama, she said, "It was like a novel!") Zell has a son and a daughter from his first marriage, and an adopted daughter from his second; his son works down the hall, as a managing director.

Zell is compact and bald, with wary eyes and a trim white beard, but his defining characteristic is extravagant confidence. Early in his career, he decided that he would not bow to convention in his speech or his attire. In the seventies, he would sometimes wear a red polyester jumpsuit and a gold chain to meetings with bankers. He once said that if you dress oddly and you're really good at what you do you're seen as eccentric; but if you're not so good you're seen as a schmuck. He still follows this rule, though he now wears pressed jeans and customtailored shirts. "He's dressed up in this Wild West outfit," Steven Roth, the chairman and C.E.O. of Vornado Realty Trust and a friendly rival of Zell's for many years, told me. "But if you close your eyes and don't look at the outfit, he speaks very slowly and thoughtfully, like a well-reasoned, careful, deliberative business guy. In the end, he is what he sounds like, not what he looks like."

Zell's determination to be original is evident even in seemingly minor aspects of his business life, such as his year-end gift to friends and colleagues. Every year since 1994, he has sent a music box of his own design to more than six hundred people. Cast in bronze and standing about two feet high, the boxes feature lyrics composed (though not sung) by Zell. Last year's song skewered the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which was meant to restore American confidence in business after the bankruptcies of Enron and WorldCom, but has been criticized for the burdens it imposes on companies. The song plays to the tune of the fifties hit "Love and Marriage"—"Sarbanes-Oxley/They've got moxie/ But for businesses/Their act is toxic/ It's not rocket science/ We're killing profits with compliance"—and two claw-like hands creep forward, as though to strangle the free market. Sometimes Zell tries to predict the next market trend, as he did in 2000, before the dot-com collapse, when the theme of his song was "the emperor has no clothes." But all the music boxes share one feature: when you push a button, you hear a gravelly voice saying, "This is Sam Zell."

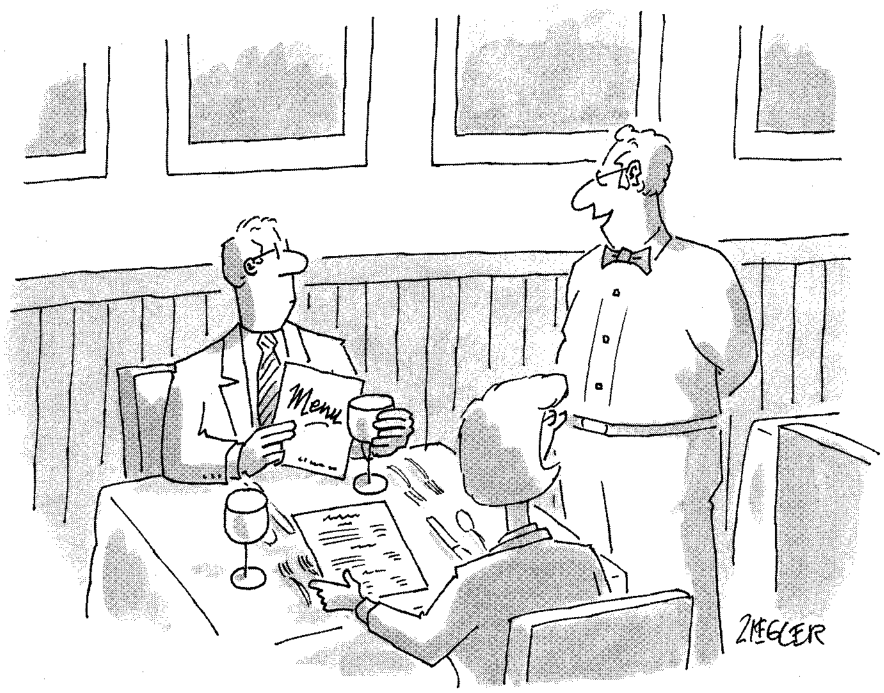
Zell's party for business associates and friends, which he holds every few years in September—around the time of his birthday—is similarly iconoclastic. The first one, in 1967, was a treasure hunt for twelve couples. As a child, Zell attended a Hebrew-speaking camp, which featured treasure hunts based on clues from the Old Testament. For his parties, Zell replaced the Bible with Chicago landmarks. By 1993, there were two hundred and forty players in sixty limousines. "I did all the clues," he said. "For example, the clue was 'no poke folk' and the answer was the Immaculate Conception Church. And the most incredible part was the matrix, because you had sixty cars moving around, and you didn't want them to follow each other. The people had phones in their cars, and they'd get lost and call me, and I'd scream at them, tell them how fucking dumb they were, and how everyone else was already back. It drove them nuts!"

"It's O.K., he's on break."

The day I visited, Zell was in a buoyant mood. He had just got off the phone with Rupert Murdoch, who was confident that Dow Jones would soon accept his bid of five billion dollars to acquire the company. (Murdoch and Zell have been friendly for about five years, but, according to a source close to Murdoch, he has been courting Zell lately because he wants to buy a stake in *Newsday*.) "Compare Dow Jones to Tribune," Zell began. "Rupert is paying a huge price. In our case, we're paying what we think is a very attractive price—so our point of entry in this transaction is such that we have a lot of optionality. In other words, for his deal to work for him, it has to meet perfection, or close to it. We don't need perfection for our deal to work. This deal is not a bet that newspaper readership is about to spike up." Rather, he said, his assumption was that "the growth would come in other areas"—such as broadcasting and digital media—"and that over time, if we did the right thing, we could stabilize newspaper income." Murdoch's bid of sixty dollars a share represented a sixty-seven-per-cent premium on Dow Jones's stock price, but Zell chose to overlook the fact that his transaction, unlike Murdoch's, was highly leveraged; when the deal is done, Tribune will have thirteen billion dollars of debt—the most encumbered balance sheet in the newspaper industry. If profits increase and the company is able to pay down the debt, Zell's return on the deal would be extraordinary.

In order to make his acquisition of Tribune financially viable, Zell devised a structure, never before implemented in a deal this large, that would enable the company to pay essentially no taxes. Tribune's directors were incredulous when Zell first proposed the idea but eventually concluded that it could work. According to his plan, Tribune would buy out the public shareholders and then become a Subchapter S corporation, which pays no corporate income tax but must pass all taxable income through to shareholders. The novelty of the scheme is that the sole shareholder would be an employee-stock-ownership plan, or ESOP, which also pays no taxes. (When employees leave the company or retire, they will pay taxes on their ESOP income.) Thus a large amount of cash, which otherwise would have been used to pay taxes, is freed to pay down debt.

This is critical, given the level of debt that the buyout is imposing on the company. Zell's initial investment of two hundred and fifty million dollars—for which he received a two-hundred-million-dollar promissory note and fifty million dollars in stock—will be redeemed when the deal closes. At that point, Zell will make a new investment of three hundred and fifteen million dollars, in the form of a two-hundred-and-twenty-five-million-dollar, eleven-year loan, plus ninety million dol-



"Although you've yet to try your water or even order an entrée, how is everything?"

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lars for the right to buy forty per cent of the company for between five hundred and six hundred million dollars in the next fifteen years. In the meantime, he will become Tribune's chairman, with effective control over its daily operations. Zell's final contribution thus represents less than four per cent of the total value of the deal. Moreover, Zell's outlay, as debt, would have some protection in the event of bankruptcy; the employees' shares, as equity, would not.

The deal epitomizes what Zell always seeks: potential for great profit, acceptable risk, and an ingenious tax advantage. To quantify the risk, Zell evaluated each of Tribune's assets and concluded that in a worst-case scenario the company was worth about fifty dollars a share. (Under the terms of the deal, Zell will pay shareholders thirty-four dollars a share.) Had Tribune's employees been invited to assess their risk, they might have reached a different conclusion. If the company is unable to service its debt, it could go bankrupt. (Zell argues that employees' jobs are already in jeopardy because the company's revenues have fallen so sharply, and that, by taking the company private and removing it from the glare of public markets, he can reverse the decline.) In addition, the majority of company contributions to employees' retirement funds will now be made not to 401(k)s but to the ESOP, in the form of company stock; many employees will have a less diversified portfolio, and one that is heavily invested in a company that is saddled with debt. Of course, if the company does well, its workers will profit handsomely. In an interview with several reporters for the Chicago *Tribune* last April, Zell summed up the arrangement with characteristic candor, saying, "It's not going to change my life style, no matter what happens. It's likely to change yours significantly."

Several of Zell's friends told me that his bid to acquire Tribune was "classic Jay Pritzker," and Zell agreed that the deal "has a certain amount of Jay in it." Pritzker, who died in 1999, built a fourteen-billion-dollar empire, based in Chicago, that included the Hyatt hotel chain. In a fifty-year career, he bought and sold more than two hundred companies, choosing firms either because he believed that they were undervalued by the market or because they had tax structures that, when the firms were combined with other companies he owned, would substantially reduce the taxes he owed the government. By the time Jay's father—A. N. Pritzker, also a tireless dealmaker—died, in 1986, the family fortune was valued at nearly two billion dollars; according to his heirs, his net worth was twenty-five thousand dollars. (The Internal Revenue Service sought more than fifty million dollars in taxes. Jay Pritzker eventually settled the case by agreeing to pay $9.5 million, plus interest.)

Zell met Pritzker in 1969, when Pritzker was looking for a young associate. Zell was twenty-eight and had briefly practiced law in Chicago, before deciding that real estate was irresistible. (He told me that his investments in off-campus student housing got him through the boredom of law school.) He went to see Pritzker. "Basically, I sat at his desk from nine until four, and, whatever he did, we just kept talking in between, and it was just a really extraordinary thing for me," Zell recalled. "We understood each other." Zell said that Pritzker offered him a job but that he turned it down, explaining that he didn't want to work for anyone. Eyal Ofer, a billionaire Israeli businessman based in London, who was close to Pritzker and later became a friend of Zell's, told me, "Jay liked to control almost all of his investments and assets and didn't like to share any, and Sam had a different view as to how he should be remunerated." Zell proposed that they collaborate on deals, and Pritzker agreed.

The first was in Lake Tahoe, in 1969. "It was one of those grandiose deals," Zell recalled. "We bought acres of land, we were going to build a thousand condominiums on the shores of Lake Tahoe. I pitched Jay on becoming a partner. They"—the Pritzkers—"put up all the money." In 1984, the properties were sold. "I called Jay up and I said, 'Don't you think we ought to have a partnership agreement, so that, in effect, the books are closed and we have a record of our relationship?'" Zell said. "He said, 'Sure, send it over.' I did. I don't think I ever got it back. I spent millions of dollars—I took out bank loans, I took title to this property—but there was never a document connecting them to this deal!" The Pritzkers were famous for doing deals on napkins, but the Tahoe arrangement seemed unusual. "It meant he trusted me completely," Zell said.

Ofer says that Pritzker and Zell were temperamentally very different. Unlike

Zell, “Jay had an aversion to the public markets,” Ofer told me. “He bought public and took it private. And he was not a person who would promote his business or himself in the public eye, while Sam is the exact opposite. Sam thrives on public appearances. You give him a microphone, he is there.”

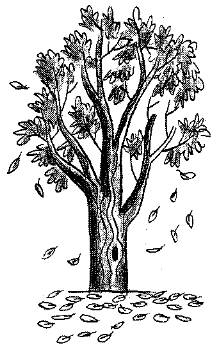
Burton Kanter, a prominent Chicago tax attorney and an expert on offshore investments, represented the Pritzker family for decades. In 1976, Zell, Kanter, Zell’s brother-in-law Roger Baskes, who was Kanter’s partner, and another lawyer, Alan Hammerman, were indicted in federal court for conspiring to avoid taxes on hundreds of thousands of dollars in proceeds from the sale of real-estate properties in Reno, Nevada, by rigging transactions through a Bahamas bank. The real-estate deal was Zell’s; the three other men had provided legal services. Zell and Hammerman agreed to testify, with the understanding that charges against them would be dropped. Kanter was acquitted, but Baskes was convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. Zell called him there frequently, and both men say they remain close. Baskes is now an investor.

The trial was a major topic of conversation in Chicago’s close-knit business community. Bank officers debated whether to do business with Zell. He had been a taciturn witness for the prosecution, and a fulsome one for the defense. Still, he had escaped charges by testifying, and his brother-in-law had gone to jail. “I was very lucky that institutions and individuals whom I had interfaced with continued to do business with me,” Zell said. “If this had happened seven years earlier, when I was a guy without any record, I probably would have been abandoned by everybody. But instead I was abandoned by nobody, so we were able to continue to function.”

Regarding the deal, Zell said, “In the context of hindsight, if you looked at the structure, you’d say, ‘Geez, it’s funky.’ But up until that point, if you structured something and it turned out not to be kosher—unless there was an egregious thing—you’d have to pay the tax or the fine.” The lesson of the case, he concluded, was that “the government has unlimited resources with which to chase you, and anybody who thinks he can take on the government is kidding himself.” Zell has since avoided investments involving the government, such as state-sponsored real-estate projects. “Government scares the hell out of me,” he said.

Zell is easily provoked. He has frequently castigated analysts who have been critical of one of his companies. At a recent dinner party, the mention of Hillary Clinton’s name prompted him to use a four-letter obscenity to describe her. A couple of years ago, Zell’s close friend Will Weinstein, a money manager who was teaching at the University of Hawaii, asked Zell to address a class on business ethics. Several of Enron’s leading executives were on trial at the time, for fraud and other crimes. Weinstein had opened the session to the public, and someone in the audience asked Zell whether, in the current environment, “where some seem to be doing almost anything to be profitable, does not the concept of ‘business ethics’ seem to be an oxymoron? And do you accept that there is a concept of greed? And how would you define it?”

“Jesus Christ!” Zell replied. “I mean, would you like a pulpit as well? I mean, when does the indictment come out? I mean, are people in the business community different from you, or you, or you?” He pointed angrily at the questioner and others nearby. “C’mon! We’re talking about weaknesses and we’re talking about strengths! Are human ethics an oxymoron? I don’t think so. Neither do I think business ethics are an oxymoron. It’s real fun to take a shot at the business community. After all, those motherfuckers are getting all the money, right? But let me tell you something: I’ll put my work schedule against anybody you know, including you, and I work my ass off every day! The idea that somehow or other the business community is full of all these greedy characters—you should see the greed in teachers’ unions! You should see the greed in any political organization! Business is made up of a whole group of individuals, and within that group there are straight people, there are not-straight people, and then there’s a whole bunch of us in the middle, who some days are straight and some days we’re not.”



Weinstein looked alarmed. “You’re not honestly putting yourself in that middle category?”

“Oh sure, why not?” Zell replied. “St. Sam—that’s an oxymoron.”

Throughout his career, Zell has prided himself on his foresight, a quality that his father impressed upon him as a child. Bernard Zielonka (he later changed the family name to Zell) was a grain broker in western Poland; according to family lore, in August, 1939, he learned that the Nazis and the Soviets had signed a treaty that would allow the Nazis to invade Poland. Zielonka tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade his relatives to flee, and on the afternoon of August 31, 1939, along with his wife and young daughter, he boarded a train heading east. The next morning, the Nazis invaded from the west, and the Luftwaffe bombed the train tracks on which the Zielonkas had escaped. For the next eighteen months, they travelled through Asia, eventually sailing from Japan to Seattle, where they arrived in May, 1941. Sam was born the following September, and the family settled in Chicago. “My father was right,” Zell said. “And he was never wrong again.”

“He was a very, very strong person—very opinionated,” Zell told me. “I had a strong but very torturous relationship with him. He would always say, ‘You don’t have to love me, but you have to respect me.’ So we would get into these huge disagreements—and then what could I do? I could only be silent, because it was disrespectful to say he was wrong. And I would be silent for three months! We would sit through dinner, silent.” The two would begin speaking again only after Zell’s mother insisted that he apologize to his father.

Bernard Zell prospered as a distributor of wholesale jewelry, and he often told his son that in the United States “the streets are paved with gold.” Sam set out to prove that maxim. At twelve, he bought *Playboy* magazines in downtown Chicago for fifty cents and sold them for three dollars to friends in Highland Park, where his family had moved. (Once, when Zell was asked about his earliest childhood memory, he replied, “I vividly remember getting ten dollars, which I found in my father’s suit-coat pocket, when I was six or seven.") His father eventually invested in the stock market, and in some of Zell's early real-estate deals. "But he was very risk-averse," Zell said.

In the early eighties, Zell and Lurie decided to diversify by acquiring controlling interests in troubled companies, often ones that had recently emerged from bankruptcy and had in their balance sheets tax credits for past losses. Such credits could be used to shield profits from taxation for many years. Some of the deals were backed by Michael Milken, the Drexel Burnham banker who pioneered the use of junk bonds and, in the eighties, used them to finance corporate takeovers (and later served a prison term for securities and reporting violations). Zell became a star at Milken's annual conference for high-roller investors, which the press dubbed the Predators' Ball. "Sam was always the Saturday-morning speaker, at 7 A.M.," Ken Moelis, an investment banker who worked at Drexel at the time, recalled. "The parties went late Friday night, so Mike knew that to get people in there early Saturday morning he needed someone who was a real draw." One joke, which Zell recently repeated to an audience of corporate executives in Los Angeles, featured a Siberian woodcutter named Stanislav and a contest to win a chicken. The winner would be the man with the largest male organ. The sheriff started measuring. "Eight and a half inches," he called out, and many contestants walked away; "ten and a half inches," he said, and more departed. Finally, only Stanislav remained, and the sheriff declared him the winner. He brought the chicken home to his wife, and told her how he had obtained it. "She said, 'You didn't show him the monster, did you?'" Zell recounted. "And Stanislav said, 'No, no, no. Just enough to win!'"

In 1985, Zell was profiled on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. One of the companies that he had acquired was Itel Corporation, a transportation-equipment-leasing firm, which had four hundred million dollars in tax credits when Zell began amassing stock and requested a seat on the board. According to the *Journal*, Zell sabotaged a planned acquisition, excoriated the company's C.E.O., and refused to shake hands. The article also quoted Itel's retired chairman, Herbert Kunzel, saying, "Sam is brighter and faster than most but he's abrasive and arrogant and he belittles people." Zell told the paper, "Management was a bunch of . . . dummies!"

Zell recalled, "My father was mortified—mortified! His son was portrayed as a boor on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*." On his father's eightieth birthday, not long after the article appeared, Zell said that he offered him this toast: "You know, I don't think I could give you a better compliment than to say, You are still a worthy adversary for me." Zell was shaken when his father died, in 1986. He told friends, "My father never really understood what I was doing."

Zell had hired a college professor to interview his parents and write a history of their escape from Poland. After his mother, Rochelle, died, in 2000, Zell sent the manuscript to several friends. He has resisted making it public, though, saying that, as the chairman of public companies, he is willing to discuss his business but not his private life. Still, he acknowledged that his family's history has had a great effect on him. "How could it not?" he told me. "I'm an immigrant's kid. I have a very different perspective on the world than somebody who grew up in Chicago and led what I would call a normal life. I think that being Jewish means that you're vulnerable forever. Was there a stronger Jewish community anywhere in the world—more intellectual, more successful—than Germany in the late twenties and early thirties, before Hitler? And seven years later they're building concentration camps! So, do I expect something like that to happen in the United States? Of course not. Do I think it could? Absolutely."

That conviction is reflected in his foreign investments, many of which are in countries that he views as potential havens. "It means I'm diversifying my exposure," he said. "A good thing to do, under almost any circumstances."

Zell often cites the real-estate depression of the early nineties as an illustration of his prescience. Beginning in the late eighties, he and a partner, the investment bank Merrill Lynch, raised more than a billion dollars in "vulture" funds to buy distressed properties and companies. Several years later, during the worst real-estate crash in decades, Zell, once again, was able to acquire valuable buildings on the cheap. However, he had not anticipated the collapse of the junk-bond market or the savings-and-loan debacle, which caused credit to dry up. Like many other investors, Zell was unable to borrow enough money to refinance his loans.

"He had essentially created a mismatch of long-term assets and short-term financing," Todd Kaplan, an investment banker at Merrill Lynch who has worked for Zell since 1986, told me. "That's what kept Sam up at night. It said on paper he was worth a lot of money, but he didn't have enough money to finance the debt at his companies that was coming due." Zell had also personally guaranteed about six hundred million dollars in loans. "That means that the bank can come after you, and you got to pay them to the extent you have resources," he testified in a court case in 1997. (A former executive at one of his companies had sued him for breach of contract.) He told the court, "I can't describe to you how terrible a period it was," and recalled having converted employees from "participants" to "partners" in deals, "as a way of giving them additional protection in the event our company didn't make it." (The case was eventually settled.) Zell said that Merrill Lynch loaned him money, which gave him time to sell assets and raise the needed cash.

Lurie had died in June, 1990, and Zell navigated the crisis alone. "Sam was derailed when Bob died, but he couldn't appear to be too devastated publicly, because it was bad for the business, and I couldn't either, for the children's sake," Ann Lurie, whose six children were between the ages of five and fifteen when her husband died, said. "But the two of us would sit in a room together, and there we could show it." He told her that he would never have another partner.

For many years, Zell had found opportunity in others' trouble. The lesson he took from his own ordeal was not that he had erred but that the real-estate business needed to have more dependable access to capital. Zell is fond of maxims (he calls them "Sam-isms"), and he coined one now: "Liquidity equals value." He and many colleagues decided to turn to the largest possible source of cash: the public equity and debt markets. They decided that they would use real-estate investment trusts, or REITs, created by Congress in 1960 to allow small speculators to invest in real estate. The trusts would be reconfigured as real-estate companies that distributed at least ninety per cent of their taxable income in dividends to their shareholders, and their shares would trade on major stock exchanges. Going public would transform the industry from a private business dependent on leverage—which brought great returns in good times but disaster in bad—into one that would operate with transparency and far less debt.

From 1993 to 1997, Zell bundled real estate that he had accumulated over many years—mobile-home parks, apartment houses, office buildings—and placed it in three newly created investment trusts, whose shares were sold to the public. The trusts represented a complicated form of investment, which needed to be explained to investors and to Congress, and Zell soon became their most visible promoter. He lobbied Congress (wearing a suit), appeared on industry panels, and fought, successfully, for the inclusion of REITs in the S. & P. 500. He also began carrying out multibillion-dollar acquisitions of premier properties, using his access to large amounts of capital. He often cites the growth of the REIT market—from about six billion dollars in 1992 to about four hundred billion dollars today—as a source of personal pride. Seeking to distinguish himself from his colleagues in real estate, Zell told me, "My vision of creating liquid real estate was not necessarily one that was shared. Most of the guys that went public in the early nineties went public to get enough money to pay off their debt. They didn't really think about it as a capital-markets transaction, or as building a business of scale—all of the things that were part of what we did."

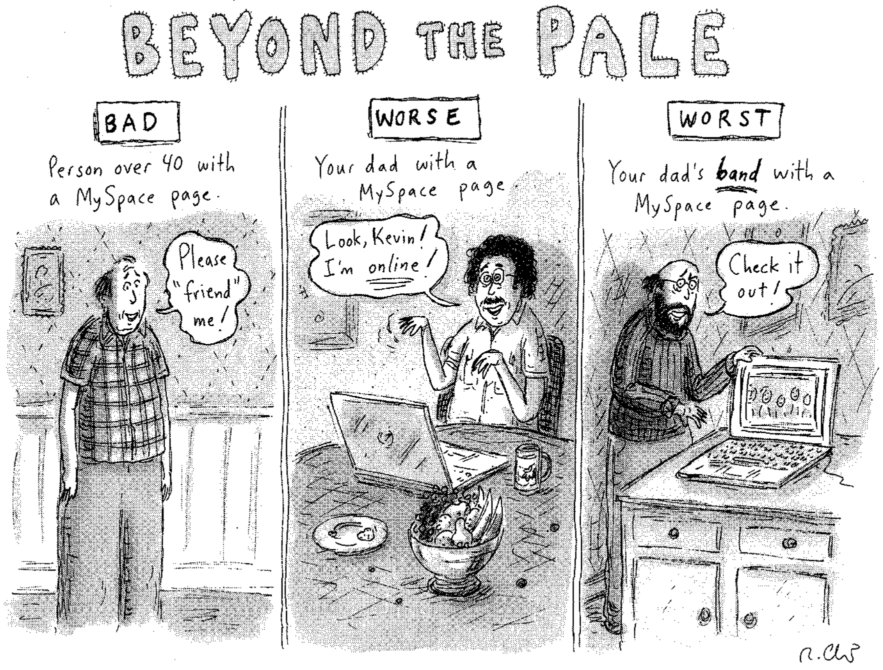
Zell decided that he would guide his companies but leave their daily operations to others. He would be "chairman of everything, C.E.O. of nothing." In 1993, he bought a ninety-four-per-cent stake in Jacor Communications, a Cincinnati radio-station company, through one of his vulture funds. Jacor was profitable, but the company had borrowed too heavily and was deep in debt; Zell and a partner, David Schulte, paid down some of the debt and replaced the company's top executives. At the time, federal law limited to thirty-six the number of stations a company could control. But in February, 1996, the Telecommunications Act was passed, deregulating the radio business. "I called the management in here and I said, 'Gentlemen, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: I want you to go out and buy all the radio stations you can,'" Zell recalled. "'I'll figure out how to pay for them.' And in two years we went from seventeen stations to two hundred and thirty-four, and in 1999 we sold out to Clear Channel. By the way, all of our competitors in the radio business eventually did the same thing—but six or eight months later." Zell said that he invested seventy million dollars in Jacor and made $1.3 billion when he sold it.

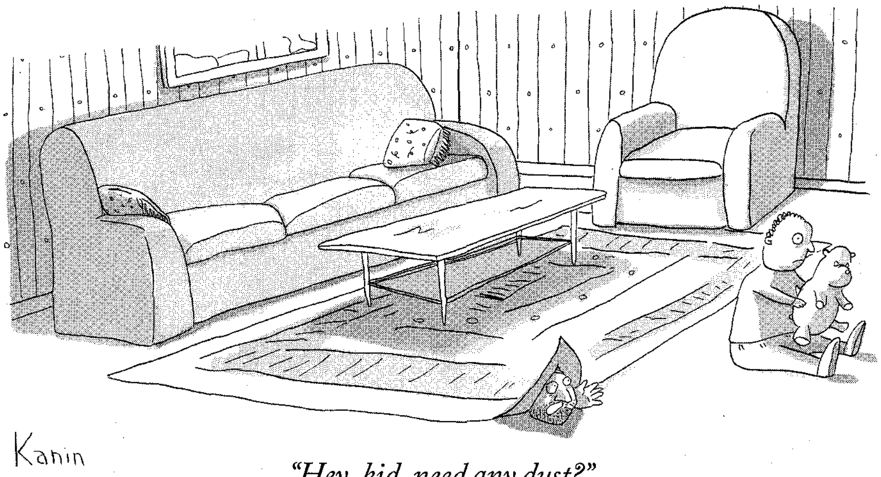
Randy Michaels, whom Zell hired as Jacor's C.E.O., recalled his first meeting with Zell, in 1993. He wanted to acquire a station in Denver that was losing money and could probably be bought cheaply, for perhaps four million dollars. He showed Zell "a deal book that looked like the Manhattan white pages. He said, 'Oh, no! Put it on one piece of paper or you don't understand it!' He threw the book on the floor." Michaels told Zell that he thought they could buy the station for the value of its license, or less. "He said, 'Listen, business is easy. If you've got a low downside and a big upside, you go do it. If you've got a big downside and a small upside, you run away. The only time you have any work to do is when you have a big downside and a big upside. So why would you put a book together for something like this?'

"And I left out a whole lot of profanity—which also stunned me," Michaels continued. "He gets your attention by communicating messages you've heard before in an unconventional way. In other words, he wouldn't say to me, 'Why don't you work harder?' He'd say"—Michaels imitated Zell's rasp—"'Hey! Reach around in your pants and see if you can find anything down there! Don't you have any balls? Go do it!'"

In July, 2006, Steven Roth, the chairman and C.E.O. of Vornado Realty Trust, approached Zell to discuss a merger of Vornado and Equity Office Properties Trust, the vast collection of office buildings which Zell had amassed over thirty years. Among Vornado's direct competitors, Equity Office was one of the lowest-performing real-estate investment trusts. Zell had believed that owning a huge number of office buildings in each of the nation's top twenty-five cities would prove more lucrative than owning a few buildings in select cities. This turned out to be a mistake. So was his decision to acquire buildings in Silicon Valley, in a seven-billion-dollar deal, in February, 2001—after the dot-com collapse had begun.

Despite Equity Office's troubles, Roth did not expect that Zell would be willing to sell. "Most real-estate guys are accumulators," Roth told me. "They don't want to give up their toys." Instead, he proposed a merger in which the best properties of


BEYOND THE PALE
BAD
Person over 40 with a MySpace page.
Please "friend" me!
WORSE
Your dad with a MySpace page
Look, Kevin! I'm online!
WORST
Your dad's band with a MySpace page.
Check it out!
R.Ch



"Hey, kid, need any dust?"

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both firms would be retained and the rest would be sold off. The resulting real-estate company would be the largest in the United States. Zell told Roth that he was unconvinced that the merger would benefit Equity Office. But during the next several months, as they continued to discuss the proposal, Zell saw a chance to create the most ambitious deal of his career.

In mid-August, 2006, another bidder emerged: Blackstone, the private-equity firm. Jonathan Gray, a senior managing director of Blackstone, began meeting with Equity Office representatives, and on November 19th an agreement was announced. Blackstone would pay $48.50 a share to acquire Equity Office, making the buyout the biggest in history. However, Zell was not satisfied. He told me that in his negotiations with Blackstone his greatest concern was not the share price but the breakup fee—the penalty that Equity Office would have to pay Blackstone if it accepted another offer. A large breakup fee could deter additional bidders, because it would make the acquisition more expensive. (The breakup fee is typically added to the final sale price.) Zell was hoping that, by keeping the breakup fee low, Roth, and perhaps another suitor, would be inclined to place a higher bid. "I wanted an auction with a floor," Zell said.

For an auction to occur after a deal of this size had been signed would be bold and unusual. "If we knew how far along they were in discussions with Vornado, we might have taken a different position on the breakup fee," Gray told me. But he understood that for Zell a low breakup fee was non-negotiable.

In the days after the deal was announced, Zell heard talk that Blackstone was seeking financing from numerous banks. He feared that this would limit the ability of other potential bidders to gain access to capital. He had come to New York to give a speech, and Gray met him at the Waldorf-Astoria. The meeting proceeded amicably for a few minutes, until Zell told Gray that he had heard that Blackstone might be tying up the banks. "I started the conversation by saying, 'Jon, I heard rumors. I don't know whether they're true or not, but let me make sure you understand where I'm coming from,'" Zell recalled. "What I wanted to do was, frankly, scare the shit out of him. And make sure that nothing he or his people would do would in any way, shape, or form impede our ability to get the deal done." Zell mentioned to Gray that there had been recent reports in the press of an ongoing Justice Department inquiry into possible anticompetitive practices among Wall Street's powerful private-equity firms. He also told Gray about his brother-in-law who had gone to jail. He warned that if Blackstone did anything to restrict access to capital in the deal he would become Gray's worst nightmare.

Gray denied that Blackstone had done anything wrong. He said that the firm had told its banks that they were free to finance other potential bidders. Nonetheless, he agreed to send a letter to the banks confirming this instruction. Gray says now, "It was all much ado about nothing."

Over the next six weeks, Roth weighed his options, and by the end of the year Vornado had decided to bid for Equity Office. In mid-January, 2007, Equity Office's share price was rising on the rumors of a Vornado bid. On January 17th, Roth was surrounded by bankers and lawyers in the Vornado boardroom, a penthouse suite overlooking Central Park, when his secretary handed him an e-mail from Zell:

> Dear Stevie:
> Roses are red
> Violets are blue
> I heard a rumor
> Is it true?
>
> Love and kisses,
> Sam

"We were at a disadvantage—we had nobody who could rhyme," Roth told me. "Everything stopped, we put twenty people in a room, and finally we came up with ours":

> Sam, how are you
> The rumor is true
> I do love you
> And the price is $52.
>
> To see if this poem will rhyme
> We should talk at a set time
> While to talk like this is nifty
> We should really talk at three fifty.
>
> Forever yours,
> Steve

At last, Zell had his auction. "Everyone wants things to happen that way—you dream about your first date being that way, but it almost never is," James B. Lee, Jr., the vice-chairman of J. P. Morgan Chase, who was one of Vornado's lead advisers and has been a longtime banker of Zell's, told me. "For Sam, this was a dream date." Vornado offered fifty-two dollars a share in cash and stock, against Blackstone's all-cash bid of $48.50. Blackstone then went to fifty-four dollars a share. Vornado bid fifty-six, in cash and stock. Blackstone went to $55.50, all cash, and won, paying about three billion dollars more than it had originally offered. "Sam got redemption," Roth said, referring to the premium paid to Equity Office's shareholders. "And I have no remorse."

Blackstone has sold off so many Equity Office properties at record prices so quickly that it has already earned back seventy per cent of its purchase price. Gray, therefore, can afford to be magnanimous, and he said that he admired

Zell's maneuvers. Zell had used a cash-and-stock bidder to drive up the price of the cash bidder, whom he had wanted all along. And he had found ways to encourage Blackstone—for example, by allowing the company to talk to prospective buyers of the properties, which gave it the confidence to bid higher. But, of all the clever aspects of the deal, Zell seems most to enjoy recounting his meeting with Gray. "He relished reading me the riot act," Gray said.

In mid-August, in an auditorium at the Times-Mirror Building, in downtown Los Angeles, Zell spoke to a group of about two hundred L.A. *Times* employees, many of whom were meeting a new owner of the paper for the second time in seven years. In 2000, Tribune had acquired the Times-Mirror Company, which had been controlled by the Chandler family for more than a century, for eight billion dollars in stock—about the value of Zell's bid for all of Tribune. At the time, Tribune was pursuing a strategy of "cross-platform" sales of print, television, and Internet advertising. But the acquisition of the Los Angeles *Times* coincided with steep declines in print advertising sales and newspaper revenues. Tribune executives tried to remedy the situation by trimming costs and demanding more layoffs at the paper—which had cut almost two hundred jobs in five years—a policy that led to a deterioration in quality, a demoralized newsroom, and the departure of two editors and a publisher. Tribune's treatment of the *Times* was a source of ongoing dispute among members of Tribune's board, which included three representatives of the Chandler trusts. Zell looked at all this misery and saw promise; the more dysfunctional a company, he believed, the more potential it had to be turned around. (Under the terms of his deal, the Chandlers have been bought out.)

Zell's remarks were off the record, but according to several sources who attended the meeting he said that he could not be explicit about his plans for the newspaper. Tribune has asked the Federal Communications Commission to exempt it from rules barring "same market" ownership of television and newspapers, and Zell fears that if he acts as though he already owned the company he will antagonize F.C.C. commissioners. (He had hoped that the F.C.C. would grant Tribune a waiver by early November, which would have enabled him to close the deal before the end of the year. But, in mid-October, the F.C.C.'s chairman, Kevin Martin, announced that the commissioners will vote on changes to a number of media-ownership regulations, including the same-market rule, on December 18th. It is not clear how the vote and its timing will affect Zell's deal.)

Nevertheless, Zell hinted that he would replace Tribune's top executives. He said that if Hurricane Katrina hit Chicago and the executives in Tribune Tower were cut off from the outside world, he thought that the L.A. *Times* and the other Tribune companies would do just fine. He also said that he believes that Tribune needs to become more decentralized by giving local executives more control. The *Times*, he said, should be able to function without someone telling it what to do. "Zell's folks are very critical of the corporate culture here, and they see many of the top guys as personifying it," a Tribune publishing executive told me, referring to the company's leaders.

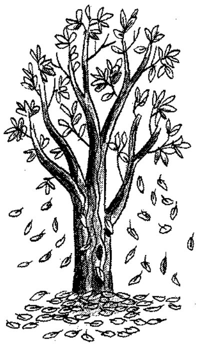
After the meeting, Zell spoke at a luncheon of a group of Los Angeles business and civic leaders, including former Secretary of State Warren Christopher. In 2006, members of the group had written a letter to Tribune's board, protesting its demands for further layoffs at the *Times;* and some had been uneasy when Zell prevailed over Burkle and Broad, because it meant that the *Times* would continue to be controlled by someone from out of town—a Chicagoan, moreover, whose first loyalty might be to Tribune's directors, with whom he was friendly. In an effort to allay this anxiety, Zell mentioned that he owns a house in Malibu, which he visits frequently, and that when he was an infant his family lived briefly in Los Angeles. He compared Tribune to Jacor, the only other media company with which he has been involved, presenting his accomplishments at Jacor as proof of his ability to achieve spectacular results in a beleaguered industry. (Randy Michaels, Jacor's former C.E.O., told me that the companies were hardly comparable, since Jacor had benefitted from the deregulation of the broadcast industry. Moreover, he said, Jacor had "strong operations with a broken balance sheet. This is the opposite: Tribune's balance sheet isn't broken. Sam's going to break it to get the deal done.")

There has been a great deal of speculation that Zell intends to sell the *Times.* In July, William Osborn, the chairman and C.E.O. of Northern Trust Corporation, and the Tribune director who led the auction of the company, told me that the *Times* might be sold, "depending on the price." But, at the lunch, Zell said that he does not intend to sell. He also assured the group that he will not interfere with the *Times'* editorial policy, and he has told Tribune's board the same thing. Of course, how he will react as an owner when he reads the editorial and op-ed pages remains to be seen. He has said that his favorite columnists are Charles Krauthammer, of the Washington *Post* (who is syndicated in the Chicago *Tribune*), and David Brooks and Tom Friedman, of the New York *Times.* "The rest of the New York *Times'* columnists are preposterous," he told me. (Although several of Zell's friends describe him as a Republican, and Zell says that he voted for George W. Bush in the last two elections, he resists being pigeonholed. "I'm an economic conservative and a social liberal," he says.)

Tribune's financial condition has deteriorated sharply since April; in the third quarter, earnings sank seven per cent, following a decline of fifty-nine per cent in the second quarter. Before the deal closes, the banks financing it will almost certainly want to renegotiate the terms. Referring to bonds that the banks have already sold to help pay for the transaction, Zell said, "I anticipate the banks are going to come back to me and say, 'We've lost money in this deal already. How are we going to share the pain?'" The banks may also require that more assets be sold to reduce the company's debt. Under the terms of the original deal, the Chicago Cubs are to be sold, and, in late October, Tribune announced the sale of two Connecticut newspapers to Hearst Corporation.

Zell told me, "I've had offers on every single asset in the portfolio. Chuck Schumer"—the New York senator—"calls me, because he's hustling for some people who want to buy *Newsday.* Baltimore people are calling, Allentown's calling, Florida's calling, and, in L.A., David Geffen and Eli Broad. So all I can tell you is that for a dead industry with no future there are an awful lot of schmucks who want to take it away from me!"

David Geffen began courting Zell last April. James Lee, of J. P. Morgan Chase, who represented Zell in the Tribune deal, recalled that, shortly after the company accepted his offer, Zell mentioned that he would be at his home in Malibu for the weekend. Lee immediately thought of Geffen, another client and Malibu resident. "David had been talking to me constantly about the L.A. *Times*, starting years ago," Lee said. He suggested that Zell and Geffen, who had never met, have dinner together. "Anything could happen with these guys. So David went to Sam's place in Malibu, and he had a blast." Geffen has been compiling a dossier on the newspaper for several years, and many *Times* employees have met with him at his Beverly Hills estate, where he conducts business. He has accumulated so much information about the company that when he offered to buy it in 2006 he declined to sign a confidentiality agreement granting him access to proprietary information. Geffen is rumored to have approached the New York *Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who is a friend of his, about moving to the L.A. *Times* if he acquires it.



Zell reads the *Wall Street Journal*, the New York *Times*, the *Financial Times*, and the Chicago *Tribune* each morning, and, occasionally, the L.A. *Times*. But there is little evidence that a regard for the public service that newspapers provide will affect his decisions about them. When I pressed him about the appeal of becoming a newspaper owner, he said, "You don't know me, O.K.? I'm a major skier. I've had innumerable opportunities to buy ski areas. Each time, whatever it costs per day sounded cheap compared to having to deal with owning a ski area. I almost bought a motorcycle company, Ducati. In the end, fifteen thousand dollars seemed a lot better deal than a hundred million. So the answer is, I've been tested. The way I look at transactions, and the way I look at risk, I have no room for sentiment."

In November, 2006, after the editor of the L.A. *Times*, Dean Baquet, was forced to resign for refusing to make the staff cuts that Tribune executives demanded, James O'Shea, the managing editor of the Chicago *Tribune*, was sent to Los Angeles to replace him. O'Shea said that he is ending his first year with about thirty fewer print employees than when he arrived; some fifty employees, many of them senior, accepted buyout offers last summer, and O'Shea has since hired about two dozen people. Zell has frequently been asked whether there will be further job cuts at the *Times* or at other Tribune newspapers. He always replies by saying that he believes that the solution lies not in cost-cutting but in finding ways to increase revenues. But when I mentioned to Bill Pate, who is the chief investment officer of Equity Group Investments and has primary responsibility for the Tribune acquisition, that an article in the *Times* had described him as "skeptical" of using staff reductions to increase profit, he said, "I'm surprised at that. Staff reductions are always painful—but I wouldn't go so far as to say I am skeptical about their occurring." Nevertheless, Baquet, who is now the Washington bureau chief of the New York *Times*, told me, "Though on paper Zell is not your ideal newspaper owner, if you took a vote in the L.A. *Times* newsroom today, they would vote Zell in and the Tribune guys out. They're hoping and praying the deal will go through."

This summer, Zell told me, "I'm a great believer in maximization. That's my whole life, and it has always been my life." As he has got older and his fortune has grown, his thrill-seeking has been only slightly tempered. On company ski outings, he still beats his employees down black-diamond slopes. ("No one else likes to ski that fast," a young Equity executive said. "You know whether to go left or right by watching that yellow suit.") And he often rides to work on a yellow Ducati, a gift from a "Middle Eastern ruler" whom he will not name. His friend Stuart Sloan said that he has dropped out of Zell's Angels because he feels that, at his age—he is sixty-four—it is too dangerous. But Zell, who skipped his first board meeting as a Tribune director last May to go on a Zell's Angels trip in Switzerland, relishes the adventure and the all-male camaraderie. After riding all day, he and his friends often stop for dinner at a roadside inn or tavern. "We start singing songs from 'Fiddler on the Roof,'" one of Zell's companions told me. "After a few glasses of wine, Sam thinks it's hilarious to sing, at the top of his lungs, 'If I were a rich man.' And then he laughs and laughs." In the past, Zell would often pass a joint to guests on the deck of his office, but he says that he long ago gave up marijuana. Once or twice a year, he and his wife take a weeklong vacation together. On their next trip, they plan to visit Nice, Laos, Baku, Luxor, and Alexandria. "Before I met Sam," Helen said, "my idea of a vacation was to go somewhere for two weeks and stay there."

The galas that Zell hosts each September bear little resemblance to the old treasure hunts. Zell hates black-tie events, so guests receive T-shirts in advance, which feature obscure clues to the identity of the evening's performer. (Recently, these have included Bette Midler, Elton John, and Paul Simon.) For the September, 2006, party, three tour boats picked up the guests from Chicago's Navy Pier and headed into Lake Michigan. "He got everybody on these boats and put them out there for about an hour," one guest recalled. "This was a crowd of pretty trendy people, all these type-A personalities, and they got like hornets! They were saying, 'Why couldn't we come by car? Are we going to have to come back on these damn things?' I know he did it deliberately. So the parties have changed, but the theme of getting your guests mad and crazed is still there."

Eventually, the guests disembarked at an industrial site in Indiana, where a fifty-thousand-square-foot structure had been built from six hundred corrugated-metal shipping containers, to resemble a Mayan temple. Throughout the evening, French acrobats leaped from one container to the next, opening doors to reveal scenes—a performing orchestra, a beautiful young woman in a colorful setting slowly turning a large cylinder—that were meant to evoke Joseph Cornell boxes. (Zell and his wife collect Cornell's work.)

However, the purest expression of Zell's dedication to "maximization" is unchanged. He is voluble on the subject of his fiduciary responsibility as a chairman of public companies. Indeed, he says that it is why he decided to sell Equity

Office: "If somebody makes a godfather offer"—one that values the company more highly than he does—"then I have a responsibility to take it, and I did." But long after he had become a multibillionaire he provoked controversy among the board members of one of his companies by seeking reimbursement for his expenses—including the use of his private plane—and compensation for his service as chairman. After a lengthy debate, the board agreed to provide a lump sum to Zell each year.

Zell has made many charitable contributions, including at least ten million dollars each to the University of Michigan, the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. But Zell's friends have told him that someone of his means should do more. Inevitably, he is compared to Ann Lurie, who not only funds a mobile medical clinic in rural Kenya but works there for about five months of every year. Millennium Park, the ambitious public architecture project conceived by Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley, was created with large donations from many of the city's leading business families. There is a Jay Pritzker Pavilion, a Crown Fountain, and a Lurie Garden. Lurie contributed ten million dollars; Zell contributed one million. Lurie and her foundation have given more than sixty million dollars to Northwestern University, forty-five million to the University of Michigan, and a hundred million to Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

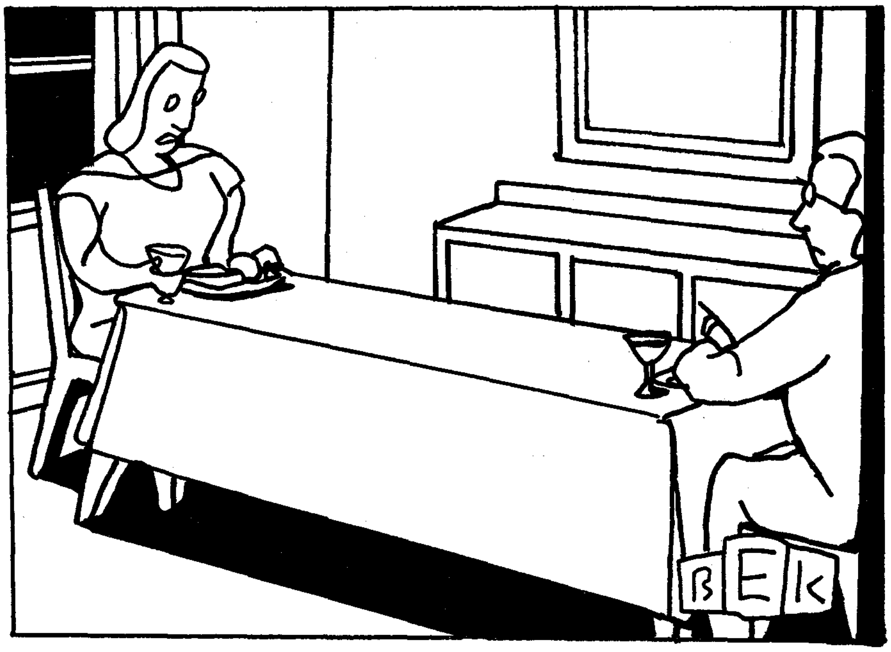
Bill Osborn, the Tribune director, said, "In Chicago, there's a very close tie between the business community and the civic life of the city—more than in any other city in the country, I believe." He cited half a dozen major civic projects and said that Zell was not centrally involved in any of them. "Sam is a builder—more focussed on that than giving," Osborn concluded. "I'm sure he'll give more in the future."

In the past year, Zell has achieved a guru-like status in the business world. The timing of his sale of Equity Office—just months before the collapse of the subprime-mortgage market, a drop in the share price of real-estate investment trusts, and the severe tightening of the credit markets—could not have been better. (The timing of his deal to acquire Tribune Company, which is rapidly deteriorating during a tightened credit market, is often overlooked.) Zell is much in demand as a speaker. In a four-week period in September and October, he spoke at the Wharton School, the University of Michigan's entrepreneur symposium, the twenty-fifth annual Cornell Real Estate Conference, the K.P.M.G. Corporate Finance Summit, and the A.C.G. Los Angeles Business Conference.

About ten years ago, Zell started investing in low-cost homebuilding projects in Mexico and Brazil; he recently began similar enterprises in Egypt, China, and India. "The beauty of all these places—where the population has increased and the housing hasn't—is that there is unlimited demand," he said. In 2004, shortly after the U.S. government announced that citizens were free to travel to Libya, Zell flew there. Since then, Gary Garrabrant, who directs Zell's international private-equity business, has made three trips to Libya, where the company is considering investing in the development of housing, office buildings, and hotels.

A recent study by Ernst & Young found that there is enormous enthusiasm at investment firms around the world for deals in emerging markets, such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China, but that only about twenty-nine per cent of the deals were completed, because executives were not visiting the countries and learning about the local cultures. Zell often says that when you invest in emerging markets you are trading growth for the rule of law, so it is critical to find the right local partner, and build a strong personal relationship. "You're making a marriage," he says.

This emphasis on personal relationships suggests a sensitivity that might surprise many who have had business dealings with Zell over the years. But Zell is an opportunist, and such sensitivity is what his latest projects require in order for him to succeed. Six months ago, he heard about an Egyptian-Israeli venture, East Mediterranean Gas, which has been building a pipeline to transport gas from Egypt to Israel. He arranged to visit Hussein Salem, an Egyptian businessman who owned about sixty per cent of E.M.G.'s shares. Zell flew to Sharm al-Sheikh, and visited Salem at home. The men regaled each other for hours with stories of their business dealings, and an intricate deal—in which Zell, along with a partner, bought more than ten per cent of Salem's shares—was signed a short time later. According to two people involved in the deal, it was possible only because Zell had developed a rapport with Salem. Zell described the transaction simply: "I went to Sharm al-Sheikh and met with Hussein Salem, and I fell in love." ♦



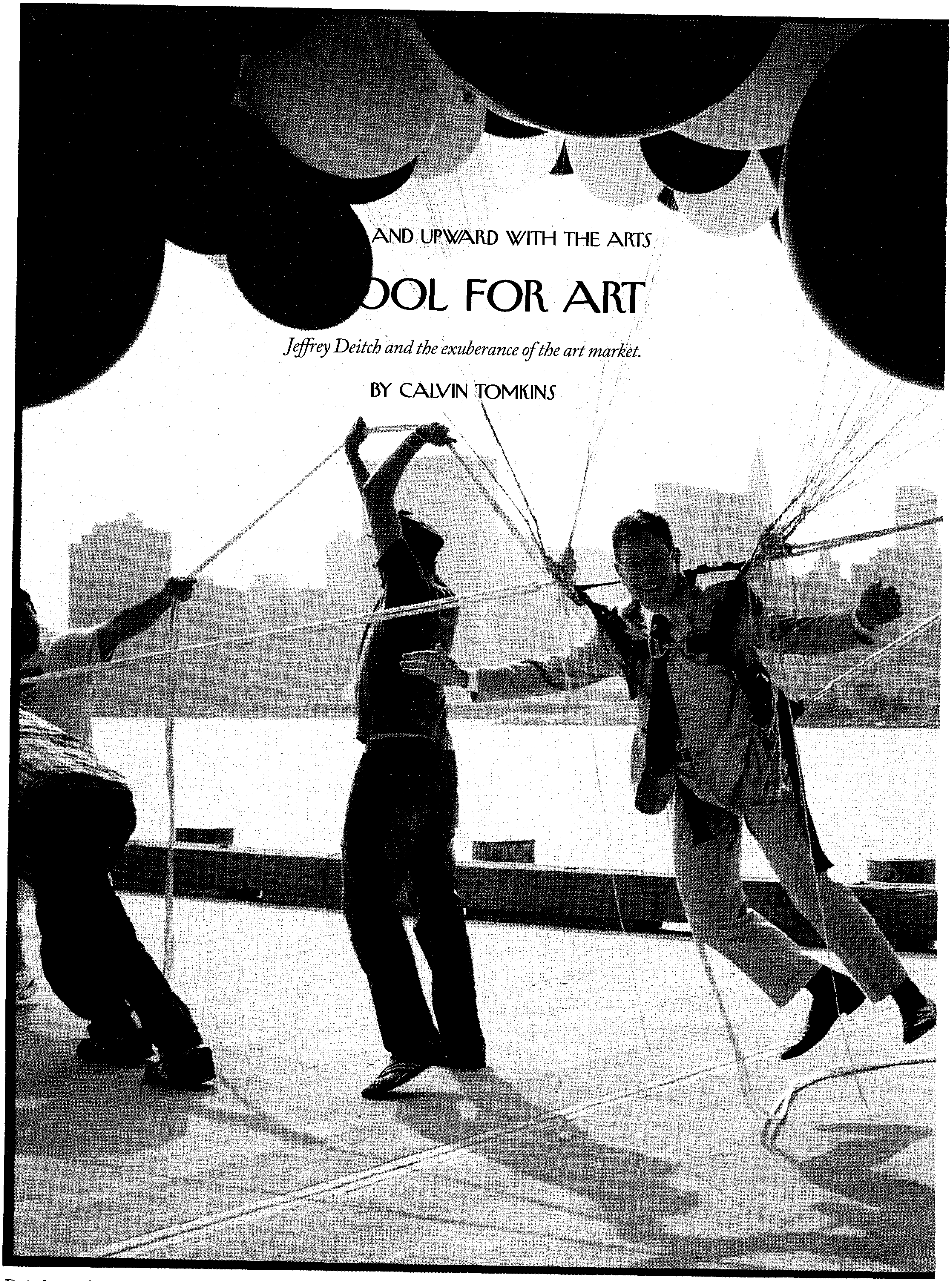
"I saw the most fascinating picture of a celebrity getting a cup of coffee today."

AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

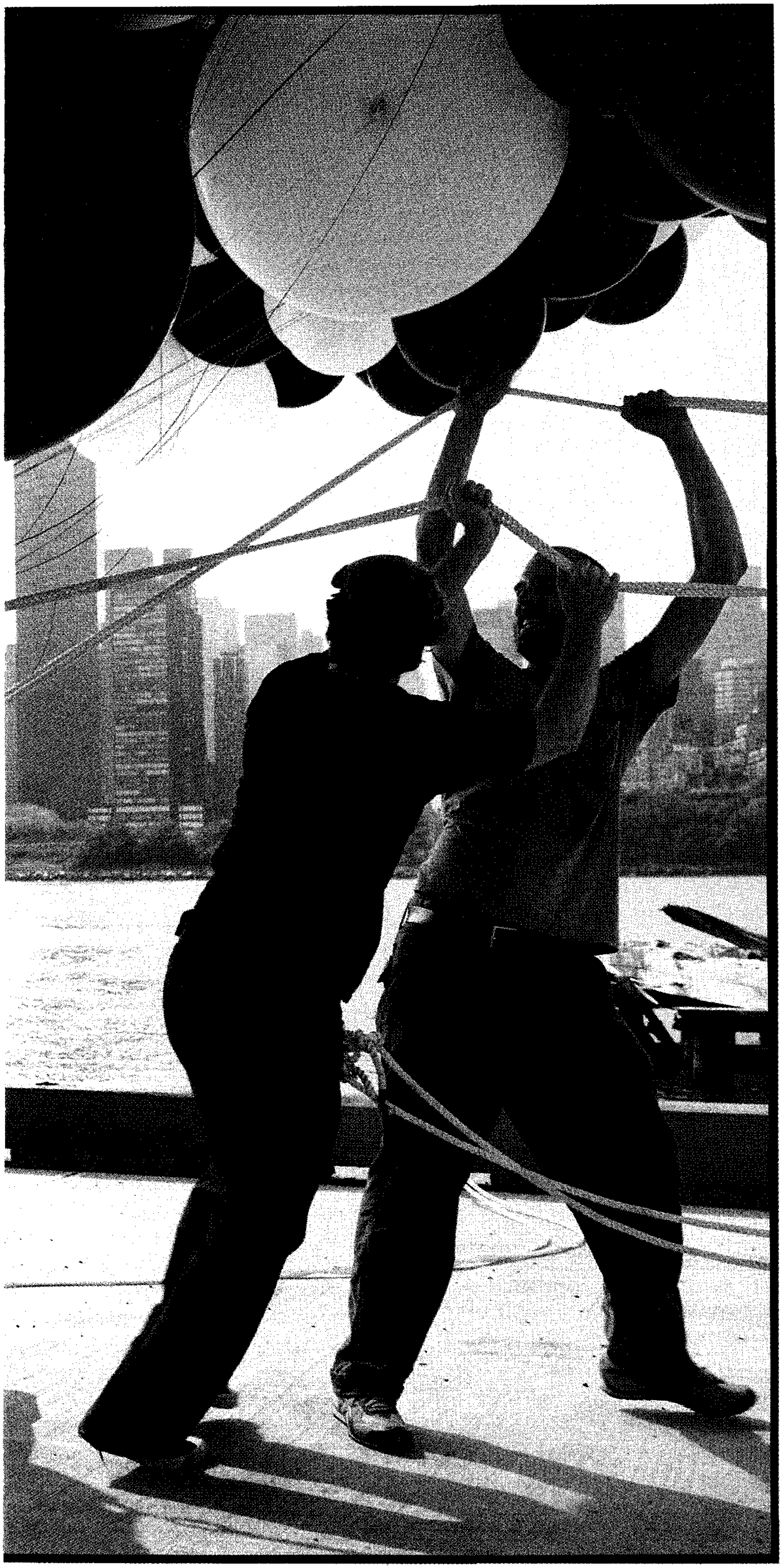
OOL FOR ART

Jeffrey Deitch and the exuberance of the art market.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS



Deitch test-drives a project devised for the Art Parade, which he helps finance with the proceeds of his business as a dealer. "The art world use



be a community, but now it's an industry," he says. Photographs by Lisa Kereszi.

On the Saturday before the May sales at Sotheby's and Christie's, the New York showrooms of both auction houses attract a cosmopolitan and fairly select crowd. Although the art on view is often better than anything in the galleries, there are not many drop-in viewers. The serious collectors wear casual clothes—designer jeans and Prada blazers, or a velour sweatshirt over cargo pants. Their advisers, who are quite often young, female, and weighed down by portfolios of data, tend toward wisps of black silk, formal but not as formal as the bespoke suits and understated black dresses favored by the resident auction-house experts, who move through the rooms greeting the major players and answering questions. In this highly focussed milieu, almost everybody knows Jeffrey Deitch. A trim fifty-five-year-old art dealer in a well-cut tan suit, he surveys the room through round glasses with buffalo-horn frames, which he designed for himself fifteen years ago. Alert and impeccable, Deitch is a low-key presence but a presence nonetheless, and also, in the sheer range of his undertakings, a somewhat contradictory one.

Since 1996, the main focus of his activity has been Deitch Projects, which generates exhibitions, performances, and installations at his two galleries in SoHo, one on Grand Street and the other around the corner on Wooster, and also sponsors or co-sponsors communal downtown events such as rock concerts, multimedia extravaganzas, and, each September, the Art Parade, a sort of Mardi Gras by and for the least fettered activists on the downtown scene. From 1988 to 1996, though, he was a highly successful private dealer and art adviser to a number of collectors, for whom he bought and sold, at auction or privately, some of the most expensive art works on the market. Before that, fresh out of Harvard Business School, he co-founded and ran a pioneer art-advisory service for Citibank; many banks and corporations had their own art collections, but this was the first time a bank had offered expert advice and assistance to clients interested in buying art.

Although Deitch more or less stopped taking on new clients when he inaugurated Deitch Projects, he continues to work with several collectors, and thus remains an important figure in the international art market, which, during the past five years, seems to have gone crazy. A wave of new American and European collectors, many of them youngish hedge-fund managers, has driven auction prices to unprecedented, almost unimaginable levels—$104 million for Picasso's "Boy with a Pipe," at Sotheby's in 2004—and even higher prices have been registered in private sales. (The billionaire hedge-fund owner Steven A. Cohen is said to have paid $143.5 million last year for a painting by Willem de Kooning.) More recently, money pouring in from non-American sources—Russian oligarchs, mysterious collectors in Dubai, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, and South Korea—has pushed prices even higher, and confirmed the ever-expanding art market as a global enterprise. The collapse, or downturn, that some art professionals have been predicting for years may be inevitable (the recent stock-market turmoil has made investors nervous), but it hasn't happened yet.

A huge portion of the new money in this market is being spent on contemporary art. One reason for this is that top-quality works of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modern art are becoming increasingly scarce. Another is that the most active buyers have acquired a ravening appetite for the brash, media-savvy productions of Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Richard Prince, Takashi Murakami, and other current art stars. They will pay $1.5 million or more for a Hirst spot painting (canvases with uniform ranks of colored circles, each one a different color; Hirst has done nearly a thousand of these), knowing that they can sell it a month later for double the price. Hirst is the current market king, an artist whose patented brand few ambitious collectors can do without. One of his larger glass-and-steel medicine cabinets, with rows of colorful pills lined up on shelves, sold for $7.4 million at Christie's in New York last spring, and a similar version went for $19.2 million in London a month later. That beats the Dow Jones, and it's a lot more fun. "More than any artist, Damien has used the art market as a medium," Deitch told me. "You could dismiss this as over-the-top commercial, but he's achieved a lot of cultural influence and power by using the market so cleverly. He's using the power of the money to enhance the impact of his imagery and his art."

The May 15th contemporary sale at Sotheby's, Deitch told me, when I joined him there earlier in the month, would almost certainly mark a turning point in auction history—the first time contemporary art would surpass Impressionist and modern art in total sales. "Several of the contemporary works here are going to go much higher than anything in the Impressionist and modern sale the week before," he said. The top prospects were a 1950 canvas by Mark Rothko (luminous rectangles of floating color), from the collection of David and Peggy Rockefeller; one of Francis Bacon's contorted figural paintings, called "Study from Innocent X," done in 1962; and an untitled 1981 painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat, the largely self-taught street artist who died of a drug overdose in 1988, and whose prices have ascended meteorically in recent years. Sotheby's catalogue estimate for the Basquiat was between six and eight million dollars. Deitch and a dealer named Alberto Mugrabi, whose family owns many Basquiats and Warhols, stood in front of the Basquiat, discussing the wild gestural scribbling above the crudely drawn stick figure of a man. "He's on fire," Mugrabi said, meaning the artist. "He has it all going."

Deitch, who wrote the first press mention of Basquiat (in a 1980 issue of *Art in America*), became his close friend, and delivered the eulogy at his funeral, plays down his role in the Basquiat market. "Before this auction, we would have valued the picture at five million dollars," he said. "What's happened? The timing is right. A few people at the top level are looking for this kind of trophy. You tend to think there's this big abstract market, but in fact it's all about individual people buying."

Deitch said that he might be bidding on the Basquiat. He was interested in several other works as well, especially an enamel-on-metal "Girl in Mirror" painting by Roy Lichtenstein. "I think it perfectly captures Roy's Pop aesthetic," he said. "The fact that it's a multiple—an edition of eight—doesn't hold me back at all from considering this a major work of art." He also liked an abstract landscape from the nineteen-seventies by the much admired German artist Gerhard Richter. Richter's figurative paintings are usually more expensive than his abstractions—there was one in the same sale, a black-and-white study of two nude girls, which carried an estimate of between nine and twelve million dollars; Deitch thought that was too high, but the abstraction, which was estimated at between two and a half and three and a half million dollars, was a good buy, and he would recommend it to one of his clients.

This was his third visit to the exhibition. He likes to have more than one look at the things that interest him, and to investigate their conditions. In some cases, he has a painting taken to a darkened room so he can examine it under an infrared light, which helps to reveal repairs or retouchings. "What I'm trying to do is to find opportunities, inefficiencies in the market," he said. Deitch also pays close attention to sales results, which sometimes lead to new opportunities. When two buyers compete for a picture, bidding the price up and up, Deitch may have access to a similar work that he can offer to the underbidder.

The contemporary artists Deitch admires most are the ones whose work is indistinguishable from their life. One example—and Deitch's greatest personal disappointment—is Cecily Brown, a British-born artist who moved to New York in the mid-nineties, joined the newly founded Deitch Projects, and then left, after two shows, to the grander horizons offered by Larry Gagosian, the world's most powerful art dealer. At Sotheby's, standing in front of a large semi-abstract painting of Brown's called "Guys and Dolls" (estimate between four and six hundred thousand dollars), which had been in her second show at Deitch Projects, Deitch said that he might try to buy it himself. "I understand what these are," he said. "You see the promise, the big, liberating, de Kooning approach to painting. It was so thrilling for a young woman to take this New York School tradition and turn it on its head, make it feminine and tough—a new kind of feminism. Cecily is a great example of the artist living the art. This is her, in her own bed. It's pretty aggressive sexual imagery."

Deitch was right about the sale being

a turning point. David Rockefeller's Rothko went for $72.8 million, a new record for a contemporary work at auction. The Francis Bacon sold to an unidentified telephone bidder, whose client was said to be a Middle Eastern collector, for $52.6 million, nearly doubling Bacon's previous auction record. The Basquiat was knocked down to another unidentified telephone caller (not Mugrabi), for $14.6 million, nearly triple his previous high. Sotheby's total sales figure (which includes the house's commission) came to $344.6 million, exceeding the $337.2 million total for its Impressionist and modern sale the week before. It was soon eclipsed by Christie's contemporary sales that week, which brought in $477.8 million and established new auction records for Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Gerhard Richter, and Damien Hirst. The star lot at Christie's was Warhol's "Green Car Crash (Green Burning Car I)"; five people were bidding, and the winner, a Christie's agent bidding on the telephone from Asia for an unnamed buyer, paid $71.7 million. "I think it's fascinating that the Warhol 'Car Crash' went for essentially the same as the Rothko, and it's amazing that a painting like that may go to Asia," Deitch said afterward. The absence of American buyers at the top level seemed significant to Tobias Meyer, Sotheby's worldwide head of contemporary art, when I talked to him about it soon after the sale. "We've never analyzed an art market in this new world, with China, Russia, and parts of the Middle East involved," he said. "For the Rothko and the Bacon, we had no American bidders." Meyer mentioned that at dinner recently Neil MacGregor, the director of the British Museum, had said to him, "You know, Tobias, for the first time in at least two hundred years the Western world doesn't make the decisions about our future."

Deitch bought several lots at Sotheby's, including the Lichtenstein enamel-on-metal painting, for more than four million dollars. The day after the sale, he called Sotheby's about one of the unsold lots—a picture on which the bidding had stopped short of the minimum price, or "reserve," the owner had set for it. Deitch negotiated a deal on the telephone, under which a client of his got the picture for an "advantageous" price. He wouldn't tell me who the client was. "These things are highly sensitive," he said. "You have to know the players, and you have to be very, very discreet."

"We may have the same books, but we highlight entirely different passages."

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When Deitch started out, in 1979, at Citibank, the auction houses played a much smaller role in the art market than they do now. Their main customers were not private collectors but art dealers, buying stock they might hold for years before reselling it at higher prices. Since the nineteen-fifties, though, when Sotheby's and Christie's established the boom market for Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pictures, they had been moving to capture a larger share of the dealers' business, and in the mid-seventies this campaign became more aggressive. Both houses started competing for major collections of Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modern art, in some cases offering loans and, eventually, guarantees to potential sellers: if the work sold for more than the guaranteed figure, the seller got the full amount; if it fell short, the auction house paid the guarantee and kept the art, which it could then sell privately. Always on the lookout for new material, Sotheby's decided in the early seventies to test the market for contemporary art, which until then had almost never appeared at auction. Sotheby's 1973 sale of Pop and minimalist works from the collection of Robert Scull, the taxi-fleet owner, was a success, but it was several more years before the auction houses really went after the contemporary market. According to David Nash, who ran the Impressionist and modern art department at Sotheby's for many years, "Until about 1980, if you bought a work of contemporary art by a major artist from a major gallery and tried to resell it immediately, you would get about half what you'd paid for it."

Contemporary art held little interest for the big-time collectors whom Deitch and Patrick Cooney, a young art historian who was hired to run the art-advisory service with him at Citibank, found themselves assisting. "I was only being paid about thirty thousand dollars a year," Deitch said, "but I was spending millions, flying first class to Hong Kong and Singapore, staying in top-level hotels, and taking clients out to expensive lunches. I had access to almost any collector, and also to important museum people, like Bill Rubin"—then the head of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art. "I was just living in this fantasy world." Deitch was quite "shameless," as he puts it, in his ability to ingratiate himself with the super-rich. Cooney, who now has his own art-advisory business, agreed with the "shameless" bit when I asked him about it recently. "We had access to a lot of very interesting people," he said. "Jeffrey has a very strong personality. He wants to get things done, and he doesn't have a lot of patience—which can be grating and also inspiring." Like most people who succeed in the art business, Deitch could remember everything he saw and heard. His art education—begun when he was an art-history major at Wesleyan University and broadened by a year at the vanguard John Weber gallery, in New York, as well as at Harvard Business School—soon included firsthand experience with everything from Old Master paintings to Picasso and Matisse, and his network of contacts was phenomenal.

The art world, meanwhile, had emerged from a long slump in the seventies and by the late eighties was gorging on irrational exuberance. Prices had been driven up mainly by new Japanese investors. "Much of the money they were spending was borrowed, against their inflated real estate," Nash told me. "They were buying art for every reason except to hang on the wall. They bought it to give as presents to politicians. I was told there were official limits to what you could charge for an apartment in Japan, but if the apartment had a painting on the wall you could charge whatever you liked." One of the reasons the art market is so hard to analyze is that it is filled with imponderables; Deitch told me, for example, that the owner of a chain of Tokyo clothing stores named Masao Wanibuchi took out a mortgage on his two-floor shop in the Ginza and used the proceeds to buy some of the top lots at Christie's and Sotheby's.

Deitch, who spent a semester in Kyoto as a high-school exchange student, was one of the few American dealers who managed to establish personal connections with Japanese buyers. He made several visits to Japan in the late eighties, and paid a call on Mr. Wanibuchi, whose fitting-room walls were covered with paintings by Cézanne, Lichtenstein, Warhol, and other Occidentals. "I made friends with a number of the Japanese dealers and consultants," he said. "One of them introduced me to the young chairman of the Isetan department store, which had entered into a partnership with Barneys in New York. He was obsessed with building a really ambitious collection of American art, so I helped him get a number of things, including Jackson Pollock's 'Number 8, 1950,' a great, classic Pollock, and also Jasper Johns's 'White Flag,' which had recently been sold at auction by the estate of Burton and Emily Tremaine."

At that auction, "White Flag" had gone to a newcomer named Hans Thulin. "The art world was much smaller then, and everybody wanted to find out who this guy was," Deitch recalled. "Leo Castelli, with whom I'd become quite friendly, called me up one day, all excited, and said, 'I have Hans Thulin's private fax number!' Leo wasn't about to go chasing Thulin down himself, so he assigned me that task." Thulin turned out to be a Swedish real-estate speculator who had been attracted by the recent publicity about art as investment and had persuaded a Swedish finance company to lend him money to buy art at auction. After several trips to Sweden and months of negotiation, Deitch arranged to buy "White Flag" from Thulin, and resold it

Deitch during the Art Parade, September, 2007. "One of my missions is to keep the radical downtown tradition alive," he says.

to the chairman of Isetan for more than twenty million dollars. This was the highest price ever paid for a work by a living artist (Thulin had paid seven million), and it remained the highest for some time, because the art market crashed soon afterward.

When the Japanese real-estate market collapsed in 1991, the Japanese art buyers disappeared, and so did the market they had helped create. Paintings by Julian Schnabel, David Salle, and other heroes of the neo-expressionist generation, which had been selling for upward of a million dollars apiece, were now worth considerably less. In the ensuing down-market, which lasted until about 1997, quite a few of the speculative buyers had to sell at big losses. Deitch, on the other hand, did extremely well for himself. In his first year as an independent art dealer, he was astonished to find that his earnings rivalled those of the chairman of Citibank (this was before the metastasizing perks for clueless C.E.O.s). As a result, he was able to buy quite a few important works of contemporary art and to hold on to them until prices went up again. He also bought Pollock's "Number 8, 1950" back from Isetan, for ten million dollars, on behalf of the American film producer David Geffen. (Last year, Geffen sold it to Steven Cohen for fifty-two million dollars.) Like several other collectors with nerve and liquidity, Deitch laid the foundations of his own extensive collection during this period, buying and keeping such trophies as Warhol's "Crowd" and Paul McCarthy's "The Garden." "The majority of my wealth comes from having made astute purchases at the bottom of the market," he told me.

What interested Deitch the most, then and now, was the art being made at that moment in New York. If he wasn't travelling, he spent his free time going to galleries and art events, and engaging in what he called "dialogues" with artists. At college and for a few years afterward, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to be an art dealer or a curator or an artist. Performance art was big then, and in the seventies Deitch did some pieces of his own, one of which involved starting arguments with people on street corners and then withdrawing from the fray and filming the results. He wrote reviews for *Arts* and other journals, and conceived and curated exhibitions, the first of which, in 1975, was called "Lives"; its theme was "artists who use their lives as part of their work," and the thirty artists he chose included Vito Acconci, Jonathan Borofsky, Hannah Wilke, and Andy Warhol. When Kirk Varnedoe became head of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, he approached Deitch about joining the staff there. Deitch was interested, but nothing came of the idea. Not long afterward, he decided that he could be freer and more creative as an independent dealer.

In 1985, he had taken Dakis Joannou, a wealthy Greek entrepreneur, to the East Village to see Jeff Koons's now legendary "Equilibrium" show, which featured basketballs submerged in tanks of distilled water, and enlarged painted replicas of Nike ads. For Joannou, the experience was galvanic—"as if Pandora's box had opened," he once wrote. It set him on the road to becoming one of the world's most adventurous and prolific collectors of Koons in particular and of contemporary art in general. Deitch, who had been a close friend of Koons since the nineteen-eighties, was about to become deeply involved with his career, whose spectacular (temporary) flameout brought them both to the brink of ruin.

They had much in common, although their backgrounds were very different. Koons came from a solid middle-class Lutheran family in Pennsylvania; Deitch's forebears were liberal Jewish intellectuals. What they shared was a fascination with American popular culture and a drive to do big things in art. Deitch's grandparents had emigrated from Russia and Poland before the First World War, and settled in Hartford, where his father ran the family coal-and-oil business and his mother worked as a professional economist. (As a teen-ager, Deitch loved to drive the big fuel truck on weekend deliveries.) His mother gave him the feeling "that if you didn't get into Yale or Harvard your life was ruined." He applied only to Yale, and didn't get in, but after four years at Wesleyan and a year with John Weber, the Harvard Business School fulfilled his parents' expectations. Deitch got on well with almost everyone, and seemed to have no private life outside the art world. For six years, from the mid-eighties to 1991, he lived with an Italian artist named Laura Grisi, whom he had met through Leo Castelli. She was ten years older than he was, and steeped in the allure of the European upper class; she took him to her father's (and Gianni Agnelli's) tailor in Rome, Caraceni, who has made his suits ever since. But even then Deitch struck people as a gregarious loner, someone who wouldn't accept dinner invitations in advance because he wanted to be available for art events, or for artists, like Basquiat and Koons.

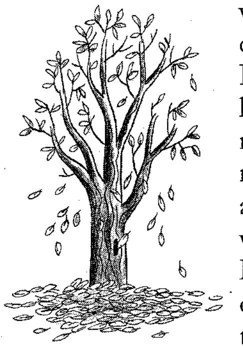
In the early nineties, Koons embarked on his most ambitious art project to date, a series, titled "Celebration," of very large sculptures and paintings based on toys, party foods, and other images of early childhood. Impatient with the efforts of his dealer, Ileana Sonnabend, to finance his earlier work, he turned to Deitch for help in producing the new series, which involved setting up a large studio and hiring dozens of assistants. Convinced that "Celebration" would be one of the most ambitious bodies of work in a decade, Deitch formed a syndicate with two other dealers, and together they took over the project.

In the next ten years, the costs of fabricating the "Celebration" series to Koons's obsessively exacting specifications nearly brought Deitch to financial ruin. Faced with millions of dollars in obligations for unfinished works that had been presold for less than the production costs, Deitch sold a half interest in Deitch Projects, which had just opened, to Sotheby's, for five million dollars. Sotheby's put him in charge of the established but superannuated André Emmerich gallery, which it had recently acquired, and paid him a sizable salary to coördinate the firm's private sales in the contemporary market. According to Deitch, his ambitious plans for Sotheby's found little favor with Diana Brooks, the firm's dictatorial and less than scrupulous chief executive (she was convicted in 2002 for her role in the price-fixing conspiracy between Sotheby's and Christie's); the arrangement between them, which had allowed him to pay off his "Celebration" costs, lasted less than three years. Deitch regained full control of Deitch Projects, but by then Koons had turned against him, and they barely spoke to each other for several years. Their friendship eventually revived. "If you excluded all the people in the art world who disappoint you," Deitch once told me, "you couldn't function."

For a successful dealer in today's frenzied art market, Deitch has remarkably few enemies; like Leo Castelli, whose style he emulates, he is a congenital optimist who finds ways to avoid confrontations and resolve disputes. Jeanne Greenberg, a former associate who became his partner in Deitch Projects, withdrew abruptly from the partnership two weeks before the gallery opened, for reasons that the legal settlement between them forbids either one to discuss. But even she speaks well of him—in carefully measured tones. "My time with him was very fruitful," Greenberg, who now runs her own gallery in Chelsea, says. "He's a very agile person, who has a taste for youth culture. He feeds off that energy, and I think it feeds off him, in a good way."

Jeffrey Deitch's apartment looks about right for a graduate student. He lives alone in two small rooms in a high-rise building in the West Sixties. There is no art on the walls, no prints or photographs—nothing. Deitch reasons that, because he leaves at nine in the morning and rarely returns before midnight, art would be distracting. "It would absorb me too much," he said. "This is a place where I can think clearly." A makeshift bookcase in his bedroom is stuffed with paperbacks—biographies, classic novels, Jewish history. The living room's single window has a view of Central Park, where he goes every morning to run. In good weather he runs up to the reservoir and circles it twice; in bad weather he does the Park Drive, a six-mile loop. He likes his neighborhood because it's near Lincoln Center, the Park, and his favorite movie houses. (He has never owned a country house.) Since his breakup with Laura Grisi, Deitch has had a few casual girlfriends, but marriage and family life do not tempt him. In his thirty-year allegiance to the life of art, he is as dedicated as any artist.

Deitch takes the subway downtown, and is usually in his office, on the second floor of the Grand Street gallery, by eleven. He and half a dozen young associates work in a cramped, low-ceilinged space where everyone can see and talk to everyone else, argue, and share ideas. "We decided at the start that the gallery was going to be based on an approach to art, not on a roster of artists," he told me. "I see it as a platform for creative community—the extension of life into art and art into life." The gallery opened in January, 1996, with a live performance piece by Vanessa Beecroft, an Italian artist whose materials, if that is the word, are groups of nude or seminude young women standing or sitting on the floor, shielded by their attitudes of aloof impassivity. Since then, and with the opening of the space on Wooster Street, Deitch Projects has put on about two hundred exhibitions, a great many of which involve performance activities of one kind or another. Deitch introduced the work of Cecily Brown, Barry McGee, Kristin Baker, and other young painters and sculptors (several of whom moved on to other galleries), and lately he has started showing works by older artists (David Salle, Francesco Clemente, Vito Acconci) who he thinks are insufficiently appreciated in the current market. The emphasis, however, has been on youth, and on the kind of breakout, mixed-media, transgender performance energy that has come to dominate the art and music scenes downtown.



"I just love this whole concept of the artist as art," he said recently. "There's been a new incarnation of performance art over the last ten years, and also a fusing of image, sculpture, fashion, music, and dance. One of my missions is to keep the radical downtown tradition alive." Since many of the performers are gay, and Deitch is not, his role as entrepreneur and benefactor, the only suit in a sea of grunge, lends an ecumenical élan to the goings on. He sees himself and the gallery as part of a "post-gay, post-black, post-feminist orientation," as he puts it. In the past year, Deitch Projects has sponsored wildly popular appearances by the Scissor Sisters (three gay men, one straight man, and one straight woman), Fischerspooner (Warren Fischer and Casey Spooner's glam-rock ensemble), and the Dazzle Dancers (whose dazzling includes rampant glitter and what a droll aunt of mine used to call nudal frontity). Deitch gave the Austrian artists' collective Gelitin carte blanche to perform at a dinner party he threw last winter in his Wooster Street gallery, to celebrate the publication of the photographer Jason Schmidt's new book. While two hundred and fifty guests dined at long tables with white tablecloths and silver candelabra, the all-male Gelitin crew, swigging bottled water and wearing buckets on their heads, spike heels, fishnet

THE PANORAMA

It seems we've slowed down the spinning earth,
standing in this rotunda, holding each other's hand,

encircled by colors. But there's so much blood
up there I can't tell where the false terrain begins.

The peasants on the canvas wall, who are used to dust
in their spit, rose for their battle commander, swinging

long-handled scythes against the Russian infantrymen
& grenadiers, as if cutting wild fields of rye & rape.

The open-air light makes it hard to tell if the tall whitish
birches are real or painted. It took them only nine months

to perfect this motion of battle, its raw depth & upsweep,
the charge & clash, the horses in mid-stride, the paced-off

land captured. With picks & pikes, the smoke soldiers
pierce the living stronghold. Here's the Cossack gunner

trying to light the cannon fuse, & this is the day's hero
who stabs him with a scythe & flings his Kraków cap

over the gun's breach. Now two peasants pull the cannon
to their position with ropes. Our Lady of Czestochowa

unfurled in the wounded daylight. Dead horses beside
their dead riders. The supply columns & runaway carts—

the snapped harnesses—block the hussar relief troops
as Polish sharpshooters take aim. We stand there

as if attacked from front & rear, from left & right,
cavaliers caught in a waterfall of hues, momentarily

silenced, & I can hear only a battlefield trumpet,
calling & calling, desperately calling.

—*Yusef Komunyakaa*

stockings, and not much else (unless you count the fetishistic pendants dangling from their pudenda), hammered together the prefabricated elements of a wooden structure that rose like a bridge over the tables; the bridge had four arched platforms at graduated heights, and when the crew finished nailing them together they climbed up—still in their high heels—and urinated into the hats of their colleagues on lower levels. "It was spectacular, perverse, uplifting, beautifully horrifying, and deeply transgressive," according to Deitch, whose tolerance for transgression is probably limitless. Most of the guests showed a comparable sang-froid, although they had neglected to bring umbrellas; only a few of them left before dessert.

Last summer, Deitch lent the Grand Street gallery to the young artists Dan Colen and Dash Snow, for one of their "Hamster Nest" installations. They filled the space waist-deep with the shredded remains of twenty-five hundred Manhattan phone books and brought in thirty or so of their friends for several all-night sessions of substance-fuelled wall drawing and other creative activities. Whether this sort of thing represents their defiant rejection of the superheated art market and late-capitalist decadence, as Deitch and others suggest, is an open question. My own sense of it is that the self-indulgence level of these activities keeps them at a sort of pre-adolescent, or even toddler, stage, where the defiant aspects fail to register. Unlike the Young British Artists of the nineteen-eighties and nineties, who were often said to be reacting against a decade of cold roast Thatcherism, the current downtown scene has not yet produced anybody who seems marked for stardom on a larger stage, but the participants project a lot of high-decibel energy. Alanna Heiss, the perennially adventurous director of the P.S. 1 art center in Queens, has admired Deitch's boundless enthusiasm for young talent since the early nineteen-eighties, when he curated two shows for her. "When Jeffrey was young, he was a grownup," Heiss said the other day. "Now that he's a grownup, he's actually very young. He's quite different from most of the other dealers I know. He's mad enough really to participate in the vision of the artist."

This year's version of the Art Parade, co-produced by Deitch Projects, Creative Time, and the magazine *Paper*, on September 8th, drew a much larger audience than the previous two installments, and showed the potential to become a New York tradition—a sort of anti-Macy's folk festival. I watched it with Deitch, who seemed enraptured as eighty-two artists or artist groups danced and cavorted along a stretch of West Broadway that had been blocked off for them by a police permit. "Wow, look at that," he marvelled, as Bambi the Corn Star and her entourage passed, clad in glitter and a few tendrils of ribbon, each one talking with matchless animation into an old-fashioned rotary phone. The Dazzle Dancers were not quite nude; Kembra Pfahler and the Girls of Karen Black wore midnight-blue body paint; and the Malcolm X Shabazz High School band, from Newark, played "The Star-Spangled Banner." "This is so New York," Deitch said.

Deitch's colleagues tend to admire, with reservations, his enthusiasm for art he can't sell. "He's a real P. T. Barnum, a visionary," said Gavin Brown, a Tribeca dealer who represented Fischerspooner before Deitch did but was happy to pass them on to him. "Maybe some of his visions are tacky, but I'm often glad someone's done that. I wonder, though, how his position in the secondary market is eroded by this trash he involves himself with." Deitch's continuing activity in the resale market is what helps subsidize all these downtown events, of course; and Deitch Projects, which represents a number of highly marketable young artists, shows no sign of going broke. In fact, Deitch has just acquired a twelve-thousand-square-foot waterfront space in Long Island City, across the East River from the United Nations, which artists will be able to use for installations and performance works that are too large and ambitious for his SoHo galleries. As Barry McGee, a San Francisco skateboarder and street artist whom Deitch has promoted and shown, put it recently, "He is not afraid to get behind huge projects that end up in a Dumpster."

At the other end of the scale, where hedge-fund collectors compete for the same ten or twelve celebrity artists (the artists as well as their work—"You feel pulled apart," one artist told me, after turning down dinner invitations from three collectors for the same night), prices now determine reputations. One reason the market has taken over, in the opinions of Deitch and others, is that critics and museum curators no longer clarify and define the main currents in recent art. In the nineteen-fifties, when hardly anybody was buying contemporary art, a handful of influential art critics (Clement

Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, and one or two others) told us which artists mattered. The sixties changed that. Pop art, minimalist art, and a host of other developments caught the critics off guard, and for a decade or more the artists filled the critics' role; Leo Castelli and other leading dealers made decisions mainly by listening to artists. Increasingly, though, auction houses, with their slick marketing techniques, were becoming the primary arbiters of quality. "I know a lot of collectors who look to the auction catalogues to define contemporary art today," Deitch said recently. "The museums are not really articulating this in a coherent way. The market provides the structure, and when you ask who are the major artists, it's basically 'What are their prices?' " Deitch sometimes sounds a bit rueful about his part in forging the nexus of art and money. "I helped create this whole thing of a professional art-advisory service, and also this fusion of art and entertainment," he told me. "I'm not sure which one the old school despises more."

Deitch has no problem doing business with the new wave of collectors. As he puts it, "The hedge-fund people are brilliant. They get very good professional advice, and they have a tremendous amount of information on prices, provenance, condition, and so forth available to them through the Internet. It's true that some of them look on art mainly as a business investment, but others are intellectually curious and see it as part of a civilized life." A museum curator told me recently that he finds something "ravenous and voracious" about the new collectors, a tendency to devour all the information they can find about an artist, and then to make very fast decisions—the same way they make decisions in the financial markets. "These young guys were born in a media society," according to Philippe Ségalot, Christie's former international head of contemporary art, who left in 2001 to start, with two colleagues, a private art-advisory business. (One of his principal clients is François Pinault, the French luxury-goods magnate, whose holdings include Christie's.) "They identify much more with contemporary art than with modern art, and they're highly competitive. They want to surpass the best museums, and by collecting contemporary you can do that, because you are quicker, richer, and more reactive—you don't need a board of trustees to approve what you buy."

A few of the new collectors have adopted highly specific goals. Aby Rosen, the German-born real-estate developer whose acquisitions include Lever House, the Seagram Building, and the Gramercy Park Hotel, and whose town house on the Upper East Side overflows with Warhol's celebrity portraits (hardly the artist's most significant work), is said to view art as an aspect of his business—a capital asset that complements his ownership of landmark architecture and the pleasure he takes in associating with artists. Some of the younger collectors establish "positions" in one or more artists, whose market value they then stand to influence. Daniel Loeb, a forty-five-year-old hedge-funder, owns about sixty works—paintings, drawings, and prints—by Martin Kippenberger, an influential and provocative German artist who died in 1997, at the age of forty-four, and whose prices have risen impressively in the past few years. Loeb's collection also includes works by Cecily Brown, Richard Prince, Peter Doig, Mike Kelley, Kai Althoff, and other contemporaries, several of whom he and his wife (who collects feminist art) have met at Larry Gagosian's dinner parties.

The most successful hedge-fund owner of all is Steven Cohen, whose SAC Capital Advisors has reportedly earned its investors an average annual return of nearly forty per cent since 1992. According to a 2006 story in the *Wall Street Journal*, Cohen, who rarely agrees to be interviewed, has bought close to a billion dollars' worth of art since he started collecting, in 2000. He keeps some of the more startling examples—Marc Quinn's self-portrait head made of the artist's frozen blood, for example—in the SAC offices in Stamford, Connecticut, where (according to the *Journal*) rows of traders wear fleece jackets to ward off the air-conditioned chill, and Cohen sits at his desk, clad in a worn sweater and jeans, tirelessly tracking the financial markets on eight TV screens. Cohen guards his privacy and spends most evenings at home, but he attends important auctions and other art-world events. "Cohen is the real thing," Deitch told me. "He really connects with the art."

It seems legitimate to wonder what effect these new collectors, whose passion for art is (relatively speaking) about six minutes old, are having on the kind of work that rises to the top in the new, global art business. "I think that the spectacular painting which already sells itself on the printed page is what you will see being most successful in this market," Sotheby's Tobias Meyer said. "The physical presence of the work is not the primary stimulant—they will want to see it already make a lot of impact on the printed page." That sounds like the see-at-a-glance accessibility of advertising art, which happens to be a prime source for the work of Koons, Prince, Murakami, and a score of other top-selling contemporary masters. It also suggests a kind of art that can just as well be bought on the Internet, and Deitch confirms that this is the case. "We do it all the time," he told me. "People will ask me to send them a digital image of the next available thing by an artist whose work they know and like, and they will buy from that. It's completely normal in our business."

Charles Saatchi, the most influential collector-dealer-exhibitor of contemporary art during the eighties and nineties, is a big user of the Internet these days. Saatchi lives in London, rarely travels to the United States, and knows the art so well that, according to Deitch, he may not always feel a need to see the originals. To a previous generation of collectors, who cared a lot about a work's physical presence, that would seem like buying blind. "When I arrived, in the seventies," Deitch said, reflectively, "it was still the older model. Collectors were psychiatrists or lawyers—intellectual people, not the social or business élite." They bought mainly through dealers, with whom they built up long-term relationships, and they sometimes had work sent to them on approval and lived with it for a while before deciding to buy. "The art world used to be a community, but now it's an industry," Deitch said. "It's not just a market—it's a visual-culture industry, like the film industry or the fashion industry, and it merges with both of them. Julian Schnabel makes movies, Marc Jacobs does collaborations with artists. We live in an increasingly culture-based economy, and the value of art is in synch with other tangible assets now, like real estate. I try to act responsibly toward the art, but if people offer tremendous amounts of money for it you really can't control that."

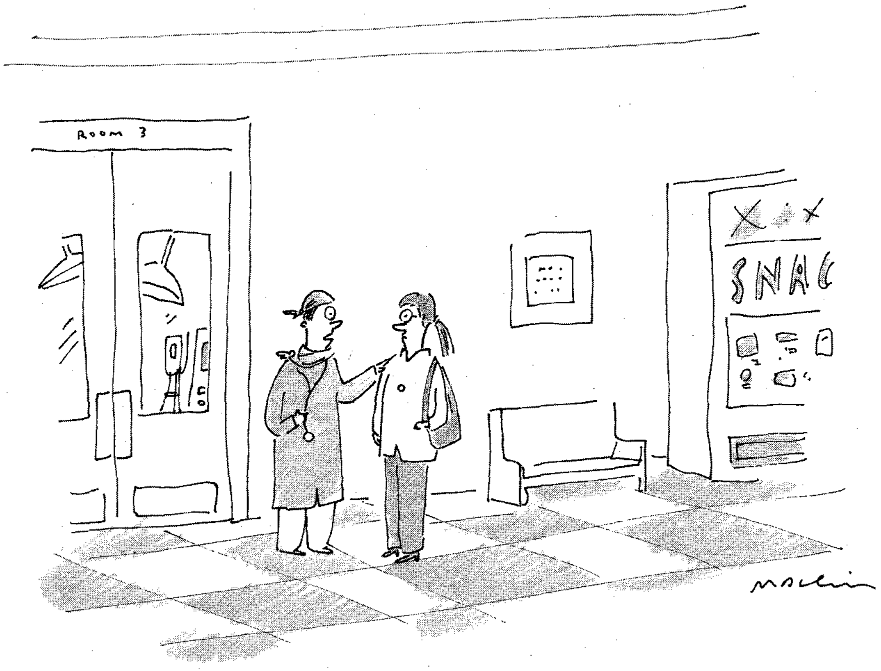
Deitch went to Moscow in June, to attend a four-day conference of art professionals on a new art museum, to be built as part of a real-estate development adjoining the Kremlin. (Russians are spending so much on art these days that the overhead displays at Christie's and Sotheby's New York and London auctions now list the bids in dollars, pounds, euros, and rubles.) From Moscow, he flew to Venice, for the Biennale, and then to Art Basel, the most important of the international bazaars that have proliferated in the past decade. For the hedge-fund crowd, this is the modern version of the Grand Tour. "By collecting contemporary art, you become part of a club," Philippe Ségalot told me.

Deitch had shipped a hundred art works to Basel and sold more than half of them in the first three hours after the fair opened. He stayed for a few days and then flew to London, to study the art consigned to the June sales at Sotheby's and Christie's. (The London summer sales are a month later than the New York ones.) London now rivals New York as an international art-buying center. The strong pound lures Americans and others to put important works up for auction there, and British tax law, under which foreign residents pay taxes only on income earned in Britain, encourages Russians, Swedes, Middle Easterners, and others to live part time in London. They can also avoid the post-9/11 visa headache; as Deitch points out, a Russian who plans to spend twenty million dollars buying art doesn't really want to waste several hours in the visa line at the American Embassy in Moscow.

I toured the London auction galleries with Deitch, and also the Gagosian and White Cube galleries—two of each—where Koons and Hirst were showing their recent work. Upstairs in White Cube's Mayfair space, under a spotlight in a darkened room, was the latest Hirst provocation: a human skull covered with 8,601 diamonds. "It's a brilliant publicity stunt," Deitch observed, "which would be of little interest if the price hadn't been so highly publicized." The price was fifty million pounds, or close to a hundred million dollars. (After four months with no takers, it was announced that a syndicate had agreed to buy the skull for the asking price. "We're going to put it on tour for two years in major museums around the world, and then sell it for a lot more," Hirst told me.) In a recent conversation, Deitch wanted me to know that he'd revised his thinking about the skull: "It's a very sophisticated fusion of conceptual art and publicity stunt."

After two days in London, I joined Deitch on a flight to Athens, where he was to work with Dakis Joannou on the installation of a new thematic exhibition. The exhibitions that Deitch has done with Joannou over the past two decades—among them "Post-Human," an extremely influential show whose repercussions are still being felt—have all sought to connect what's going on in art with significant developments in the culture at large. Deitch usually suggests the theme and the title, and writes and produces the catalogue—a striking visual document that extends the show's range beyond Athens and its other European venues. The title of the new show (it opened in September at Joannou's Deste Foundation) was "Fractured Figure." It was being built around recent additions to Joannou's collection, and it centered on what Deitch, Joannou, and a small group of friends,

"Why didn't you go before we left?"



"Well, on the bright side, he can't get any deader."

• •

including the artists Maurizio Cattelan and Urs Fischer and the museum curator Massimiliano Gioni, saw as the shattering effects on the collective imagination of recent political and social events—the Iraq war, international terrorism, environmental degradation.

Cattelan and Gioni arrived in Athens the day after we did. We were also joined by Ashley Bickerton, an artist of Jeff Koons's generation who dropped out of the art world fifteen years ago and moved to Bali. He kept right on making art, though (Joannou owns several pieces), and he had agreed to show a new painting and an older sculpture in "Fractured Figure."

Athens was having an extreme heat wave, with temperatures up to a hundred and eleven degrees Fahrenheit. This didn't stop Deitch from taking his early-morning run on Philopappou Hill, with its view of the Acropolis. Bickerton ran with him, and confided to me later that, although he is in good shape, he had trouble keeping up. That evening, Joannou and his wife, Lietta, invited all of us to dinner. We went first to their sleek modernist house in one of the better residential sections, next door to a house they had built for their daughter and her family. The Joannou place has been extensively redesigned to accommodate their ever-growing private collection. A flight of stairs leads down to a gallery (formerly an outdoor swimming pool) containing large and assertive works—sculptures and paintings—by Koons, Prince, Cattelan, and other contemporary-art stars, as well as equally striking pieces by artists who are less well known (Urs Fischer, Paul Chan). The panoply of emphatic and sometimes overpowering images continues upstairs in the living and dining rooms and on two terraces, one of which is dominated by the red version of Koons's twelve-foot-tall "Balloon Dog" sculpture, the other by an Urs Fischer skeleton and two huge bronze figures of a defecating woman and a defecating man, by Chris Ofili. Dakis (as everyone calls him), robust and youthful-looking at sixty-seven, still spends four days a week directing his various enterprises, which include construction, hotels, and the Coca-Cola franchise in Greece and twenty-five other countries, but, now that his and Lietta's four children have grown up, art is his main interest.

From the time that Joannou started collecting seriously, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, he has bought the work of a relatively small number of contemporary artists, and he has bought it in depth—about thirty-six pieces by Koons, for example. Collectors who buy on this scale tend to employ advisers and/or curators, but Joannou relies on his own judgment and knowledge—with occasional help from Deitch and a few others. He likes to know the artists whose work he's buying, but not just so that he can invite them to dinner. Like François Pinault, Joannou follows an older tradition of patronage. He wants to engage with the artists' thought processes, help them realize ambitious projects, and provide museumlike facilities where their work can be seen by the public.

Dinner was at the ultra-hip Semiramis Hotel, one of five hotels that Joannou owns in Athens, in which the public spaces abound with art from the Deste Foundation or the Joannou collection. In the morning, we were going to the island of Hydra for the weekend, on Dakis's ninety-foot cabin cruiser, Protect Me from What I Want. (The name comes from one of Jenny Holzer's aphoristic L.E.D. sculptures.) Bickerton nearly missed the boat; he had been arrested, for unspecified activities, in a late-night bar near our hotel and detained briefly; the night manager had helped to free him, but he had overslept.

After Bickerton absorbed some sea air and several cups of coffee, his resurgent sense of mischief fastened on Deitch, who was dressed, as usual, in one of his Caraceni suits (no tie, but still a suit). "This guy is so uptight," Bickerton announced, hugging Deitch affectionately. "He has an iron rod from his anus all the way to his neck." From time to time, Deitch would withdraw from the others on the boat to have a brief, intense cell-phone conversation, presumably with a client, about the upcoming London auctions. The trip to Hydra took about an hour. We anchored in a cove at one end of the island for lunch, which turned out to be a Greek banquet, served on the fantail. Everyone swam off the boat except Deitch (another source of merriment to Bickerton, who swims like a porpoise), and by late afternoon, when Protect Me from What I Want pulled into Hydra's harbor and we loaded our luggage onto donkeys for the ascent to the Joannous' place, about halfway up a steeply terraced hillside, Holzer's message had lost some of its ironic bite.

In the house where the Joannous stay, next door to a slightly larger guesthouse, each of the thick-walled, whitewashed, ancient-looking rooms contains a series of drawings or prints by a single artist. Their bedroom occupies the third floor and has the complete set of Tim Noble and Sue

Webster's exquisitely detailed "Joy of Sex" prints, forty-two in all, in a single line, up near the ceiling. Dakis does all the installations himself, and changes them from time to time—he has been buying a lot of contemporary drawings lately. He also showed us his latest project: a small slaughterhouse that he wants to lease, on a cliff over the sea; abandoned decades ago, falling into ruin, and sinister, with primitive meat hooks and bloodstained walls, it had struck him as a venue for temporary, or maybe permanent, installations, and he wanted suggestions about which artists to invite. That evening, sitting on the Joannous' terrace overlooking the harbor, we watched a sound-and-light show with fireworks, reënacting a crucial battle in the Greek War of Independence, with Dakis providing whispered explanations in English. It was one of the few times all day when the conversation was not about art.

The next morning, sitting on the shaded back terrace with Dakis, I asked him if he had thought about the future disposition of his collection, which now includes around four hundred works. "I thought about it, but I decided I would stop thinking about it," he said, grinning. "I know what I'm not going to do is to make a private museum. The collection will have a different meaning once I'm done with it."

A few weeks later, over dinner in New York, I asked Deitch if he thought that contemporary art was good enough to justify the astonishing prices being paid for it. "But that's a question I wanted to ask you!" he said. "O.K., for me the answer is yes. Of course it would be depressing, when I'm so involved in it, to think this period in art is nothing like the sixties, or the forties, or the years around 1910. But I do think contemporary art is exciting now. One thing these new artists have is a tremendous respect for their craft, for the way things are made. With some of the painters who had great success in the early eighties, their paintings weren't very well made. But people like Koons—even though he doesn't do the actual painting himself—are masters of their medium. I definitely believe their work will hold up."

As for the current craziness in the market, the next big test will come this month, with the modern and contemporary sales at Sotheby's and Christie's. Both houses have committed themselves to high guarantees and stand to lose heavily if the prices fall short. Several art professionals had told me that today's art market was different from any they had seen—more broadly based, more international, more competitive. Deitch agrees that it's bigger, but he's not so sure it's different. "There's been a real and substantial increase of demand in the art market—many more people looking and buying," he said. "But there's no market, ever, that didn't eventually go down. Two things could happen. One, the art market could collapse under its own weight—if auction estimates become too inflated, for example, and a high percentage of works are unsold, and the market gets spooked. What's more likely is that something external could happen, like the collapse of several more big hedge funds. I do think the market will go down at some point, but then it's going to go up again." Things only get truly dangerous, Deitch had said earlier, when there's a lot of leverage involved—people buying art with borrowed money, as the Japanese were doing in the nineteen-eighties.

Deitch feels that the influence of the hedge-fund buyers has been exaggerated. "What I find most relevant," he said the other day, "is that there's been a real increase in serious collectors who are buying over a longer term. Dakis, Pinault, Cohen, Eli Broad—they're not buying to sell next year, and they're the real foundation of the market. Yes, you can have a downturn where some of the speculators want to bail, but it won't affect these people. Meanwhile, there's a vastly increasing market for truly innovative art, and I think the demand will increase more than the supply. So I'm very confident over the long term."

In London, we had both been struck by a Gustave Courbet nude that was offered at Sotheby's nineteenth-century European painting sale on June 27th. Painted in 1865-66, when the artist was at the peak of his artistic power, it showed a robust red-haired girl in the same lushly sensual pose that Courbet adapted for his larger "Woman with a Parrot" (1866), which hangs in New York's Metropolitan Museum. Deitch had it taken to a private room, where we examined it in detail. "This is probably the last great Courbet nude in private hands," Sotheby's nineteenth-century expert told us. "It hasn't been on the market for a long time—the same owner has had it for the last eighty years." Deitch listened attentively, gazing at the painting, smiling and nodding. As we were leaving, he said, "Of course, this blows away everything we've seen today." Sotheby's estimate for the painting was three to five million dollars, and Deitch said he might try to buy it—for a client, or maybe even for himself.

Toward the end of our dinner in New York, I inquired about the Courbet. He told me it had sold for just below the low estimate of three million. Could he explain how a picture of that importance could go for so little, compared with the prices being paid for contemporary art?

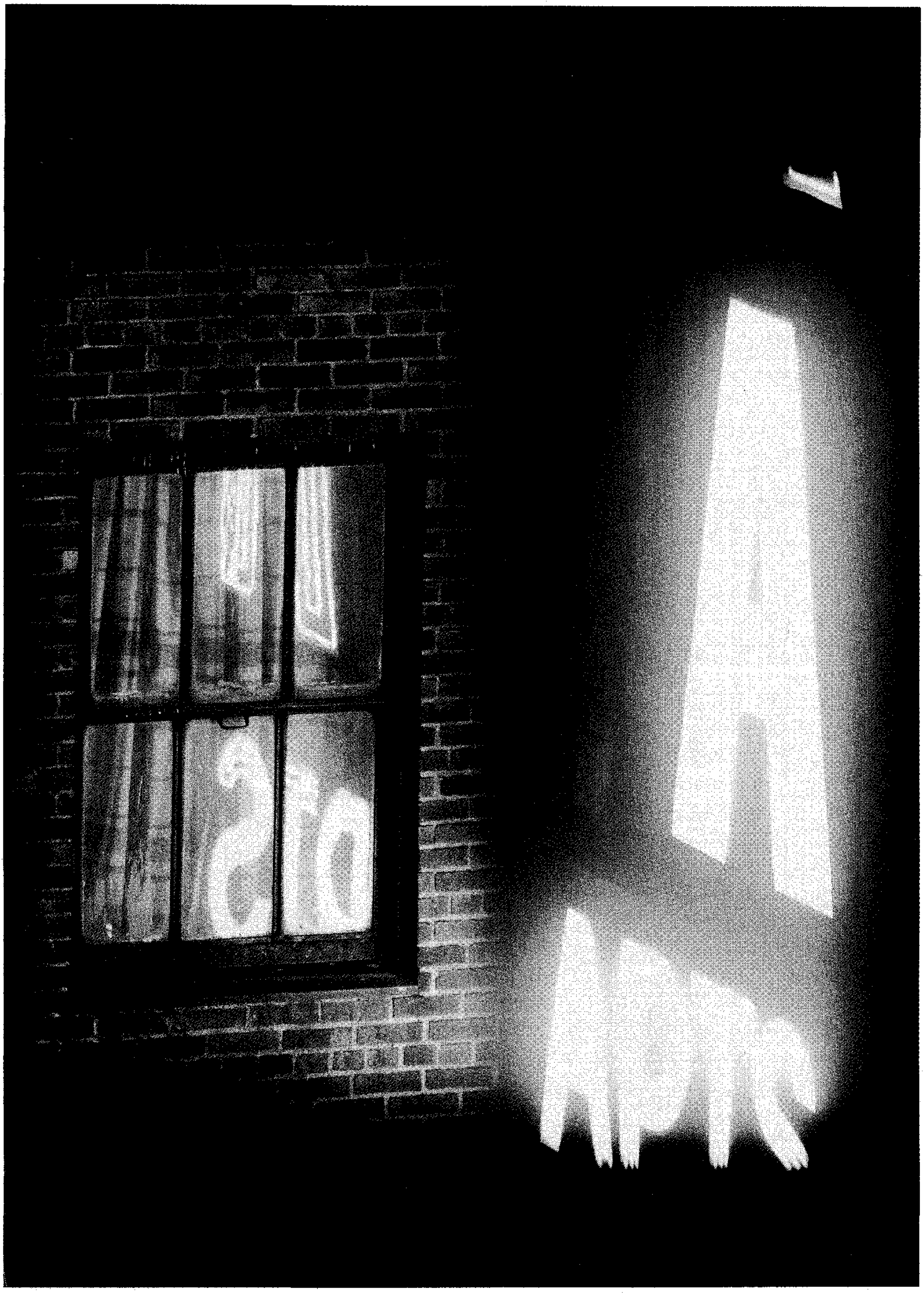
"O.K.," Deitch said. "Does a Warhol 'Car Crash' for seventy-two million make any sense, in other words, against that Courbet for three million? Absolutely. There are disequilibriums in the market, sure, but in the long run things tend to smooth out. Warhol's situation relative to other artists will get readjusted. But there's a very good reason why he's rated so high now. No other artist has changed the way people make art and think about art more than Warhol. With artists from the ages of twenty to sixty, Warhol is the No. 1 influence."

Deitch had not bid on the Courbet after all; he had tried to interest four different people in the painting, but for one reason or another none had responded. "I should have bought it, because it sold low," he said, somewhat ruefully. "But that would have meant coming up with three million in cash within thirty days, and I wasn't in a mood to take the risk. Ever since the Koons 'Celebration' thing, I've been very conservative financially—I don't want to get into that kind of trouble again. But I'm going to find out who bought the Courbet. It's a great picture, and it may come my way again." A week later, he did find out. "You'll never in the world guess," he said on the phone, sounding exultant. He wouldn't tell me who the buyer was, but he let drop that it was someone who was part of his own story, and my wife, who is an art-world sleuth, made an educated guess that turned out to be right: the buyer was Jeff Koons. Apparently, in today's art market, it takes one to know one. ♦

FICTION

BROOKLYN CIRCLE

BY ALICE MATTISON



Fourteen years after her divorce, Constance Tepper agreed to let her former husband, Jerry Elias, spend a few days in her Prospect Heights apartment (though not in her bed). They'd lived in Philadelphia when they were married, and Jerry still lived there. Now and then, he came to New York on business. Jerry was a tall, thin man who had grown up in his grandfather's lamp store, learning not to break the lamps by standing up in slow stages. His father was Jewish, his mother a light-skinned black woman from the neighborhood who worked in the store and married the boss's son. Jerry looked ethnically ambiguous.

He'd inherited the store and worked there all his life, but eventually—the last independent store on its downtown-Philadelphia block—it failed. Now he was a consultant to other small family businesses. He liked to tell clients that he'd kept his store going well beyond its natural life span by putting all the lamps on a series of extension cords and plugging the last one into an outlet at City Hall. Con wasn't sure what that was a metaphor for.

This time, it turned out, Jerry was not coming to New York on business. He studied historical topics that made him curious, travelling several times a year to places where something had happened, or might have happened. He did nothing with the copious notes he took: he wasn't writing a book or even a blog. When Con and Jerry were married, friends had asked how she knew that he didn't take these trips to be with women, and she replied that she figured he didn't because that idea infuriated her less. His pointless joy in these explorations seemed like solipsism. The trips denied Con's existence, their child's existence. (They had a daughter, Joanna, now thirty.) Con had never been sure that anything Jerry learned on his expeditions was true. So when he said that he wanted to stay with her while investigating somebody named Marcus Ogilvy, who was supposedly significant in the history of Brooklyn, she was pointedly—maybe rudely—uninterested. She knew she was irrational on this topic. A lawyer, she was generally rational.

Jerry turned up, when he got to New York, not in Con's apartment but at her office, near Union Square, at 6:30 P.M. It was a Thursday in November, 2003, six months into the Iraq war. Sitting at her computer, Con sensed a laden body and turned. Jerry had dropped a shapeless nylon bag on the floor and was stretching his long arms up and out. When she stood, he wrapped his arms around her. "I walked from Penn Station," he said.

She extricated herself, then kept him waiting until she came to a stopping place.

"Let's go out for dinner," Jerry said. He stretched his arms wide again, and stretched each finger as well. Maybe he was getting the kinks out, but the gesture seemed to say that he approved of Con's dingy office. She worked for a nonprofit that focussed on women's employment issues.

"Joanna's at my apartment," she said.

"Oh, is that where she is?"

"That's where she is." He picked up his bag. They'd take a cab to Brooklyn and go out to dinner with Joanna. He swung the bag as if to test its weight, as if it might or might not be heavy enough to knock Con over, to change her mind about a couple of things. He would not literally hit her, of course—Jerry was physically benign in all circumstances.

Much about Joanna confused her mother, and lately the confusion had intensified. It had been hard to keep track not just of Joanna's emotional geography but of where, in the simplest terms, she was. A sculptor who lived with a boyfriend in the South, Joanna had got a three-month internship in New York, and had been staying with Con. She worked in fibre, spending her evenings knitting grotesque, compelling shapes out of greenish twine, and now the apartment housed six or eight gigantic dry sea creatures.

The Tribeca sculptor with whom she was interning, Barnaby Willis, worked in steel. "I could work like Barnaby, maybe," Joanna said one evening. "I once did a piece in aluminum. Aluminum sucks. But steel—you can bend steel, twist it. Steel has ductility." Con was doubtful. Joanna had a drinking problem—or a former drinking problem—and worrying about her was a habit.

Then Barnaby left town for a while, and Joanna returned to the South, leaving behind her green twine and her sea creatures, which Con had come to like. Living with the creatures was simpler than living with Joanna, and Con had had mixed feelings during the last few days, when Joanna changed her mind from one moment to the next about whether she would return to New York.

First, she'd phoned to say that Barnaby wanted her to come back, and she didn't want to. "I never told you," she said. "He raped me." She hung up, then called back five minutes later to say that he had not raped her.

"Is he harassing you? Report him," Con said. She had dealt with this sort of thing professionally. Joanna laughed.

The next call was about a fight with her boyfriend, who had accused her of sleeping with the famous sculptor. In the call after that, Joanna was breaking up with the boyfriend. The next one had come in the middle of the night, two days later, from jail. "I was stupid," Joanna said, "but also I was absolutely right. I went to a bar because I was so upset. The TV had something about Iraq, and I said something. This guy next to me started arguing—" There was a pause. "They're telling me to hurry. Nobody in this state believes in freedom of speech. I got into an argument about Iraq and I was arrested."

"What should I do?" Con said. She had been awakened by the call.

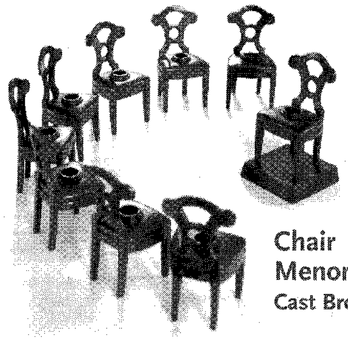
Now Joanna was crying. "Mom, get me out. Just get me out."

By the time Con arranged for bail, Joanna had been released, and by the end of the day the charges had been dropped. Still, she'd spent a night in jail, apparently only for speaking her mind. Joanna had returned to New York the night before Jerry arrived, irate at both the jail and her boyfriend, and determined to get her lawyer mother to sue someone.

Yet Con felt powerless. She wondered if Joanna had been drunk. She thought the arrest might have been legal. "It would be hard to prove that what they did was illegal," she said to Joanna. "If the bartender asked you to leave, and the cops asked you to leave, and you didn't, the arrest was legal."

"The cops didn't ask me to leave—they just told me to shut up."

NEIL SELKIRK, "HOTEL OPERA, NYC" (1975)



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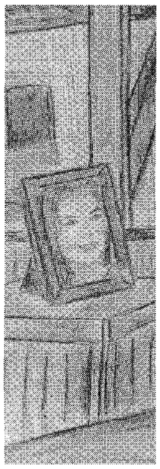

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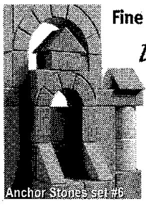

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"They did?" Con said. "Were there witnesses?"

"Nobody was on my side. But we have to do something."

Then Con had received an e-mail from Jerry. "What should we do? Could this be racial?" Joanna was only half as African-American as her father, but her skin was as dark as his, with a rosy tinge, and she sometimes said, "I'd have been a slave." At other times, she remembered that she was mostly Jewish (Con was Jewish) and said, "Hitler would have killed me." People never quite knew what Joanna was, and nobody could take their eyes off her: she was tall, and had a magnificent head with untrimmed masses of light-brown curls. Maybe it had been racial.

Con still didn't want to act. She didn't want to phone the A.C.L.U. or the N.A.A.C.P.; she didn't want to discuss Joanna's case with colleagues or law-school classmates. She didn't want to do anything.

"It doesn't make sense," Con said to Jerry, in the cab. "Going to court over a young artist who got drunk in a bar."

"It doesn't sound to me as if she was drunk."

"Even so."

Jerry changed the subject—to Con's relief—and talked about his current historical treasure hunt. "It's a huge Brooklyn secret that everybody could know about—but nobody does!" he said. "Except me." He squeezed her shoulder, as if she, too, were in on the secret.

"What was that name? Marcus?"

"Marcus Ogilvy. Early-twentieth-century transportation genius. Crazy genius. I'll tell you." Instead, he grew silent, then said, "She was arrested for speaking her mind. And maybe for looking ethnic." Con didn't reply.

In the apartment, Joanna came ambling out of her room, talking on her cell phone. She raised a finger to show she'd be off in a minute, then gave an ironic wave at her father. Con was struck, as if newly, by her daughter's sturdy, glowing looks. Joanna hung up and Con crossed the room, reaching to take her daughter's big head in her hands. But in another moment they were arguing. Joanna quickly determined that her father also believed that they should pursue her case, and her rage at the police and the people in the bar rose until she was screaming at her mother. "They carried me off to jail. They locked me up. What does it take to make you care?"

"Did they treat you badly?" Jerry asked.

"No," Joanna said, quieting. "I will stipulate that they were polite. I was given weak coffee. I was called Miss."

"But it was terrible," Con said. "I just don't—" She had eventually e-mailed several people about Joanna's experience, but she'd equivocated, saying, "Given Guantánamo Bay, this is trivial, but . . ." Maybe she'd dissuaded while trying to persuade.

"Let's get something to eat," Jerry said.

They walked together—almost a family. It was cold. Joanna, in her thick parka, was warmer and bigger and walked faster than her parents, and Con, the shortest, in a jacket that wasn't warm enough, felt like a small scurrying animal, an urban kind, with matted fur. Jerry was never cold, and he strode along like a New Yorker, his open raincoat puffing behind him. He always wanted Chinese food if possible.

"Barnaby agrees with me," Joanna said, once they were seated in the restaurant.

Barnaby seemed to be back in favor. Con wanted wine but didn't order a glass lest Joanna feel encouraged to do the same. Then Joanna ordered a glass of wine, so Con did, too. Jerry shook his head. He rarely drank; maybe he so enjoyed being exactly as he was that he didn't want even the mild alteration in mood brought on by a glass of Chardonnay. "What does he agree with you about?" he said.

"Did you go to his studio today?" Con said.

"I talked to him. He was horrified. I mean, we all know there's intense pro-war feeling in this country, but who would have thought I'd spend the night in jail? That's what Barnaby said."

"What does an apprentice do?" Jerry asked.

"I'm not an apprentice. I wish I were. Then he'd have to teach me until I knew everything he knows. It's a three-month internship."

"So you prepare material?" Jerry persisted.

Joanna sighed. "I haul things around. Sometimes he shows me how to do things, holds my hand when I use a tool. Sometimes I go buy him a sausage-and-pepper sandwich. Then I pick up the pepper strips that fall on the floor."

They ordered Sichuan shrimp and scallops. Joanna continued talking about Barnaby, and Jerry asked her what she'd do when the internship ended.

The food was brought. "I'm not going back." Joanna reached for the shrimp dish. "Maybe I'll live in Barnaby's studio." She waved down the waiter and asked for another glass of wine.

"Wait a minute," Con said. "For one thing, isn't he married?"

This part of the conversation was over, said Joanna's chopstick, describing a boundary in the air.

Jerry was undeterred. "So, is he leaving his wife for you?" he said.

"That's not an appropriate question," Joanna said.

Con reflected that she had never learned how to be anybody's mother, certainly not the mother of an adult daughter. She said nothing. Jerry began telling stories about the building of the New York City subway. His skin looked young, and his eyes had the same genial alertness that had attracted her the first time she met him, the same delight in the great adventure of being Jerry Elias that had charmed and infuriated her when they were married.

Fed, they were warmer on the walk home, and Joanna was kinder. After a block or two, she dropped behind and soon Con and Jerry heard the rise and fall of her voice—intimate and exasperated—on her cell phone.

"How does she afford that thing?" Con said.

"I help," Jerry said. "I'm doing all right."

Their daughter caught up. "Could I have the leftovers?"

"You're still hungry?" Jerry said.

"No—Barnaby hasn't eaten." She took the bag from her father and waved down a taxi a few minutes later. "I'll stay over," she said, and raised a friendly hand to her parents.

"At least she's not in jail," Con said after a silence, as they walked.

"And they dropped the charges," Jerry said. "Still . . ." The streets had a late feel, with a few dogs out for their bedtime walks. "Who do you think we should talk to?"

"I wish she hadn't been drunk," Con said again.

"Con, I don't think she was drunk."

"She was in a bar. She was drinking. She has a history of drinking. If she wasn't drunk, she might as well have been drunk."

"Aren't you pleased that she's turned to you?" Jerry said. "And you're a lawyer. It's a damn good case. Maybe wake up a few people who can't seem to realize how different things are these days."

"Are things that different?" Con said.

"Since Bush came in?"

"There have always been bad guys."

They were silent for the last half block, their footsteps sounding on the sidewalk. Then Jerry said, "It's different. Blacks have an early-warning system."

"And you think Jews don't?" Con said. When they remembered that they were a black and a Jew (sometimes they remembered that they were two Jews), they'd either quarrel amiably or become quiet together; one way or another, they were getting along.

In Con's apartment, they sat in her little living room and watched the news. The Pentagon had announced that a covert force was hunting Saddam Hussein. "Do you mind if I turn this off?" Con said. She went for sheets to put on the sofa. Then she said good night, stopped in her study to check her e-mail, and went into the bathroom.

Jerry was standing in the hallway when Con, still dressed, came out, and as she turned toward her bedroom he stepped closer. They looked at each other for a long time, and then he put his arms around her. He smelled like her youth. When she stepped back, he took her hand. "Con—do you think . . ."

It had been so long that he was someone new—but not new. She knew the ways in which he was a jerk, but right then she didn't care. She leaned into his embrace, and they went into her bedroom. She hadn't slept with anyone in a long time, and she was post-menopausal; she rummaged in a drawer for lubricant.

Sex with Jerry was athletic, funny, companionable. She sometimes forgot

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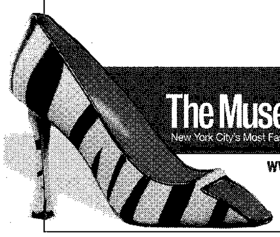

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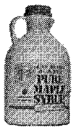

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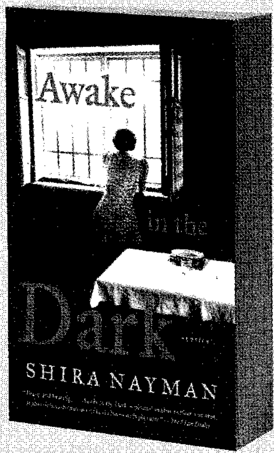

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that sex with another person was more satisfying than masturbation, which provided Con with frequent, sharply pleasurable interludes but did not lift her spirits. Sex with someone else made her charitable. Jerry's egotism was not annoying after sex—it was sweet, like a child's. He stayed inside her for a long time. Then he withdrew, sleepily kissed her under one eye, and slept. He took up room in her bed, but was gone when she woke in the morning.

Con was not sorry she'd slept with Jerry. When she came into the living room, dressed, he was also dressed, and had a laptop on his knees.

"You could come with me," he said, not looking up.

"Come with you where?"

"It's just Brooklyn."

"Oh. Marcus Ogilvy?"

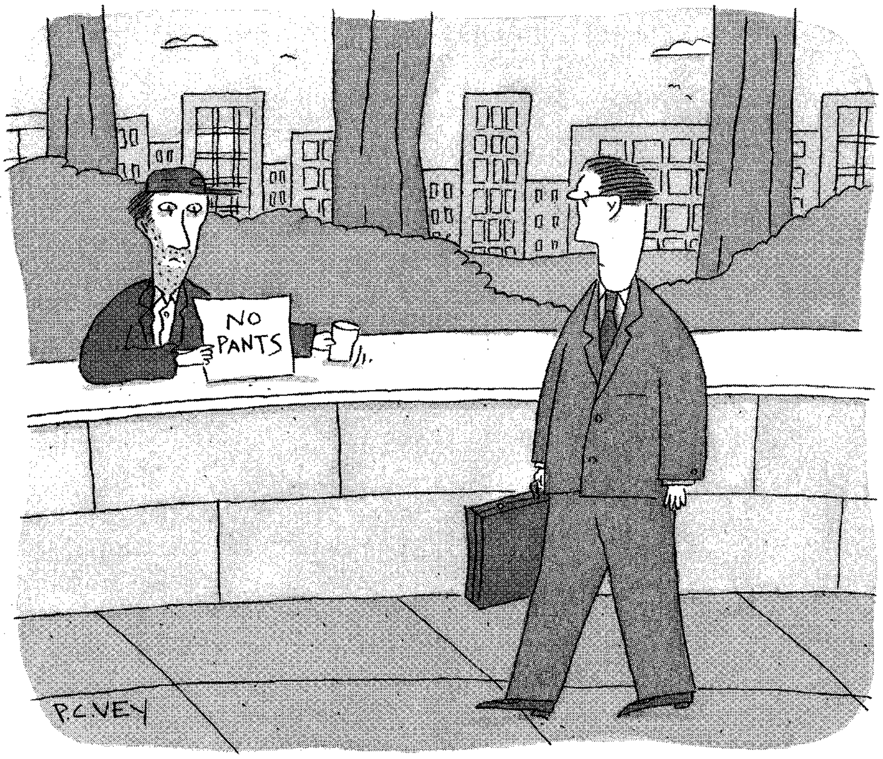
Con was tempted. She remembered the wild jealousy she had felt over Jerry and his trips, a desire to search with him in some unlikely place for the remnant of a fact nobody else cared to know. In the first years, she'd begged to go along.

"Tell me," she said, sitting down, but she was wary.

He told more subway stories, finally getting to the bit of New York history that had caught his attention this time—Marcus Ogilvy's mad scheme of the nineteen-twenties, the Brooklyn Circle. "It was never finished," Jerry said, "but parts were built. The books say there's nothing left, but my guess is there are fragments. You Brooklynites are so used to incomprehensible structures, you walk past these things every day, and nobody notices."

Marcus Ogilvy's mother had been a German Jew, and on his father's side he even had one black grandparent. He studied architecture in Europe, late in the nineteenth century, then returned to his native New York and made a small fortune developing new neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens. He'd been in his thirties when most of the subway was built, in the first decade of the twentieth century, but he was never enthusiastic about underground transportation. Before the subway, elevated trains had crossed parts of the city. They were noisy and dirty, so up-to-date thinking at the start of the new century was all in favor of the subway.

"Ogilvy loved El trains," Jerry said, gesturing so expansively that Con felt as if she had been reduced to someone at the back of a lecture hall. He went on to explain how Marcus Ogilvy had built a mansion on Arlington Avenue in East New York from which he could hear the reliable rumble of the Jamaica



line as he fell asleep, and he'd enjoyed standing on the platform of the Cleveland Street Station, gazing at the city around him, instead of descending into a tunnel that he always feared would collapse, or would harbor rats and snakes.

Ogilvy was especially troubled by one characteristic of the subway system as it extended to Brooklyn. The lines stretched from Manhattan like the tentacles of an octopus, but nothing connected them except in a very few places. To travel between some locations in Brooklyn, it was necessary—it is still necessary, Jerry pointed out—to travel into Manhattan and back. Ogilvy had proposed to change that with an elevated line that would not be ugly. Jerry opened a map. Across Brooklyn, he'd drawn a curved line in pencil. Ogilvy's Brooklyn Circle was to have been an elevated arc linking the Parkside Avenue Station of what is now the Q train to the Winthrop Street Station on what are now called the 2 and the 5, then to the Crown Heights–Utica Avenue Station on the 3 and the 4, and finally to the station now called Broadway Junction, where the J, the A and the C, and the L trains meet.

Ogilvy's favorite word was "elegance," and, in his designs and articles, he had actually referred to some features of the European Gothic cathedrals he'd admired as a young man, like pointed arches in the supporting pillars, to let more light into the street, and groined vaults underneath the tracks. He'd wanted people's eyes to be drawn upward, their moods lightened. At that time, the subways were privately owned—the city didn't own them until 1940. Ogilvy had secured the necessary permissions, found backers, and begun building supports and tracks.

"Bits of the line are still there," Jerry said. "I'm sure of it."

"What happened to it?"

"Oh, what do you think? Nineteen twenty-nine happened. He lost everything."

She didn't know why, but she wanted to go with him. She called in sick. The weather had turned even colder. Con put on her winter coat for the first time that season. It smelled pleasantly of dry cleaning. Jerry still wore his raincoat. As they left the apartment, they bumped into each other, and Con recalled that doorways narrow when new lovers try to go through them together. Not that they were new lovers. They took the subway to Parkside Avenue. As they went down the steps into the station, Jerry said, "Funny thing—for a while I had a girlfriend around here."

Con pretended more nonchalance than she felt. "Around here?"

"A couple of blocks from here. She used the same station."

"Maybe I know her."

"No," he said. "You don't know her."

Just before Parkside Avenue, the train emerged into modified sunlight, running in a ditch that was open to the sky. They got off, and stepped out to the street. Con didn't know how many women had been in Jerry's life since the divorce. She was in touch with him often enough that names or incidents might have come up, but apparently he concealed names and incidents. It occurred to her that she might have run into him in a local restaurant with another woman—which would not, she told herself, have mattered. "So you're not seeing this woman anymore?" she said.

"Who?"

"My neighbor."

"Well, she's not your *neighbor*." He paused, looking toward Prospect Park and then Parkside Avenue. "No, I'm not. We go this way."

Solid, square apartment houses looked well cared for. Farther along were smaller buildings. There was no sign of a failed elevated train line, and Jerry said that most of this construction was more recent than the Brooklyn Circle; developers would have obliterated everything. His exuberance was slightly tiresome. They would find nothing. Con was sorry she hadn't gone to work.

They turned onto Nostrand Avenue at P.S. 92—a massive, plain structure that seemed to tolerate no nonsense; any scraps of lost train lines would have been swept away—and began zigzagging, one block north, one block east, peering through gaps between buildings.

"As a lawyer," Jerry said abruptly, "you should be less timid."

The remark turned Con's irritation into anger, partly because she'd always felt that was true. "What, you're some

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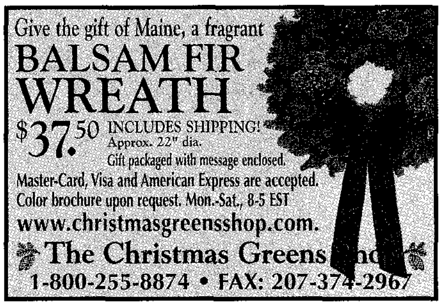
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sort of authority?" she said. "Is there anything you are quite certain you don't know?"

"Oh, sure," Jerry said mildly. The angrier she became, the blander and more reasonable he would be.

Then, in an alley, she spotted an upright steel object with a crosspiece. She waited to see whether he'd say anything, but he didn't. Half a block later, though, Jerry suddenly grew extremely quiet: his long limbs slowed and it was as if he were completely alone. He put an arm on her shoulder. He pointed to three pillars with fretwork and arches intact between them, in the middle of a block off Winthrop Street, in a parking lot. Of course he was right: she knew in an instant that what she was seeing was like nothing she'd ever seen before. The pillars did not resemble fragments of other elevated-train structures. They were gray metal, and the pointed arches between them were sharply cut. They looked light.

She tried to delight in him the way she would in a child who'd produced such a discovery. From his pocket, Jerry brought out a stack of three-by-five index cards. He scribbled with a ballpoint pen, leaning on one knee.

They continued walking, now passing attached houses with aluminum siding. On New York Avenue, something stood between two buildings, but Jerry couldn't be sure. Then, near Wingate Park, was a set of pillars with something between them. Jerry had a small camera, and he took some photographs. Con was cold.

Everyone they saw was black. Now the houses were smaller, and there was room behind them for dilapidated bits of an old elevated railway. Twice, they spotted single pillars, then another set of three. Con could recognize them easily, with their distinctive pointed arches. Near Utica Avenue, they found a complete set of track work on six or eight pillars. A light, sturdy structure, it was just visible behind some houses. Jerry stopped a man in the street. "Can you tell me what that is?"

The man looked. "Part of the Long Island Rail Road they no longer use," he said authoritatively.

"Oh, thanks," Jerry said.

"You like feeling superior," Con said, as they continued walking.

"No!" Jerry sounded hurt, and she put her hand on his arm.

"Just teasing," she said.

In a Korean grocery, they bought apples and pretzels and bottles of water. Con had hoped for lunch. They crossed Eastern Parkway. Now the neighborhoods became shabbier, and Con and Jerry seemed more conspicuous. "Are you a teacher?" a little girl asked Con. Near Pacific Street was another set of tracks. It was wedged between small apartment buildings, as if removing it had been too much trouble, or maybe it even helped support the buildings. The tracks crossed a narrow vacant lot strewn with garbage and glass. Jerry walked confidently into the lot between the buildings to get a better look at the tracks, just twenty feet from the street, but Con remained on the sidewalk. "I'd given up on finding something like this," he called. Double pillars, here, were linked by small platforms.

Con was tired and cold, and the pretzels and apples had not satisfied her. She stayed where she was, and at last Jerry returned. They began to walk slowly past the structure. "You're not as interested as I thought you'd be," he said.

She didn't try to be fair. "You don't quite know anybody else is real."

He stopped where he was and looked at her. His buoyancy was gone, and suddenly he looked older, somehow both more Jewish and more African-American. His face was less handsome, but maybe better, and Con was sorry she'd spoken. "What do you mean?" he said.

"I shouldn't have said that." They'd stopped, and she was cold already, but it seemed necessary to wait where they were, at a street corner a few yards beyond the structure. "It's beautiful," she said quietly. "I should have said it's beautiful."

"But you don't really care?"

"You want me to care."

"I want everything about you, Connie," Jerry said. "Yes, I want you to care!" Now he sounded angry. "I want you to care about Marcus Ogilvy. I want you to care about Joanna being arrested for saying what she thinks!"

"Of course I care," Con said with some irritation. They were arguing like married people. "I do see that what you've found is wonderful," she contin-

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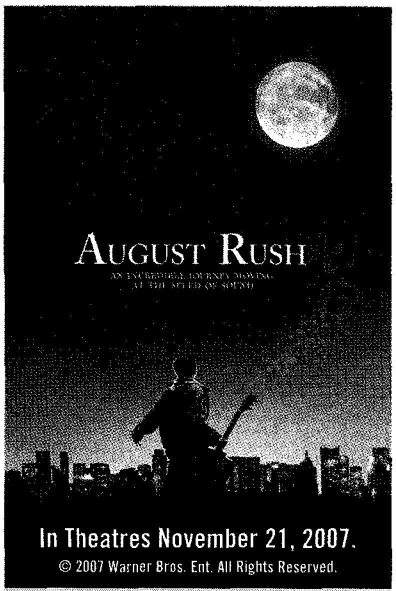

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ued. Without her noticing, they had turned around, and now they were walking back to the short, graceful section of Marcus Ogilvy's tracks. Sunlight coming through the fretwork made patterns on the ground.

"We could climb that," Jerry said.

"Are you crazy?" But she wasn't angry anymore.

"Why not?"

Con's black wool coat was so clean. And it came down to her knees. If she'd expected to do any climbing, she'd have dressed differently. "It's illegal," she said.

"I don't see any signs."

"Of *course* it's illegal."

He began slapping his thigh lightly, rhythmically, like someone getting ready to move vigorously. They stood under the tracks, and sunlight touched their faces and clothes. Jerry gazed up. He pulled out his note cards and scribbled, then moved to another part of the lot and scribbled some more. He photographed the tracks from every point. His pleasure was palpable. In truth, the pillars didn't look hard to climb, with cutouts in the gray metal just right for a hand or a foot. Still, she was relieved that he seemed to have forgotten the idea.

But then he said, "O.K., let's go up." She was curious, too. She could have her coat cleaned again. They started up. Jerry went first. No one seemed to be watching. What they were doing didn't feel unsafe. In summer, neighborhood kids were probably all over this structure. Looking up, Con could see cleaner spots, places in the elaborate fretwork below the tracks where children had held on as they climbed. She confidently grasped the uprights. Her purse bounced on her back.

At the top, they heaved themselves over a metal fence and onto a track bed. The tracks were still there, ending at the back of what looked like a warehouse. They were not dirty. They would not be hard to walk on, but maybe she wouldn't try that. On either side of them, faceless apartment windows seemed to ignore everything. Maybe the residents weren't home, or maybe they didn't look out these windows.

Jerry gingerly stepped along the tracks. Con crouched, holding the barrier she'd just climbed over, watching her ex-husband and new lover, watching his graceful legs. Maybe she would keep him as her lover.

"Come on," Jerry called. He was leaning on his knee, writing.

"I'm fine here," Con said.

Then Jerry took a misstep between the tracks, and yelped, coming down hard on an ankle. And there was a knock on the window behind Con. Still holding on, she turned. A man stood at the window, an elderly man in a white shirt. He was waving his hand as if to shoo her away, frowning.

She smiled reassuringly and turned back to Jerry. "Are you all right?" she called.

"I don't know yet." He slowly stood up and put weight on his right foot. "Not all right." Carefully, he raised his foot and shook it. There was little danger of his falling between the tracks to the lot below—there were plenty of crossbars and underpinnings. But he might have got a foot caught in one of Marcus Ogilvy's graceful openings and cutouts, the ones that had allowed the light to touch them when they stood below.

"Can you come back here?" she said. She looked behind her. The man was still watching, a flash of sun on the window glass hiding his mouth, but his forehead and eyes visible. He looked puzzled. She wasn't sure he could see Jerry. She gestured. She smiled again. The man looked. His skin was the color of dark cherrywood, his forehead big and shiny.

He knocked again, and when she turned he frowned and shooed her once more. She shrugged, and started—as well as she could—toward Jerry. The wind up here was strong, and she had a sudden fear of falling through the spaces between the tracks after all. Now that she was closer, she could see that the spaces were larger than she had believed. She would die. She would die trying to make her way toward Jerry. He should never have ventured out onto the tracks. He should never have wanted to come up here. It was sooty. Her coat—still with the conscientious smell of recent dry cleaning—was already dirty. It flapped and caught at her legs. She might trip on it. She took a step. Now there was no place to put her hand, so she leaned over carefully and got down on her hands and

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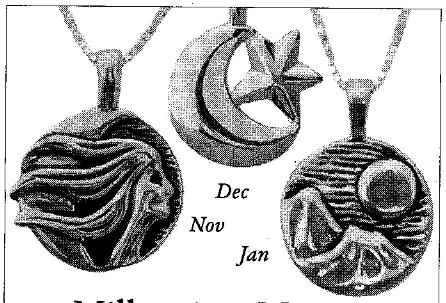
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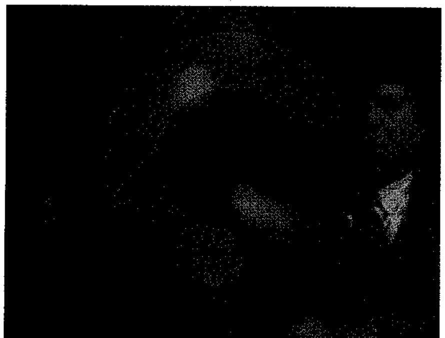
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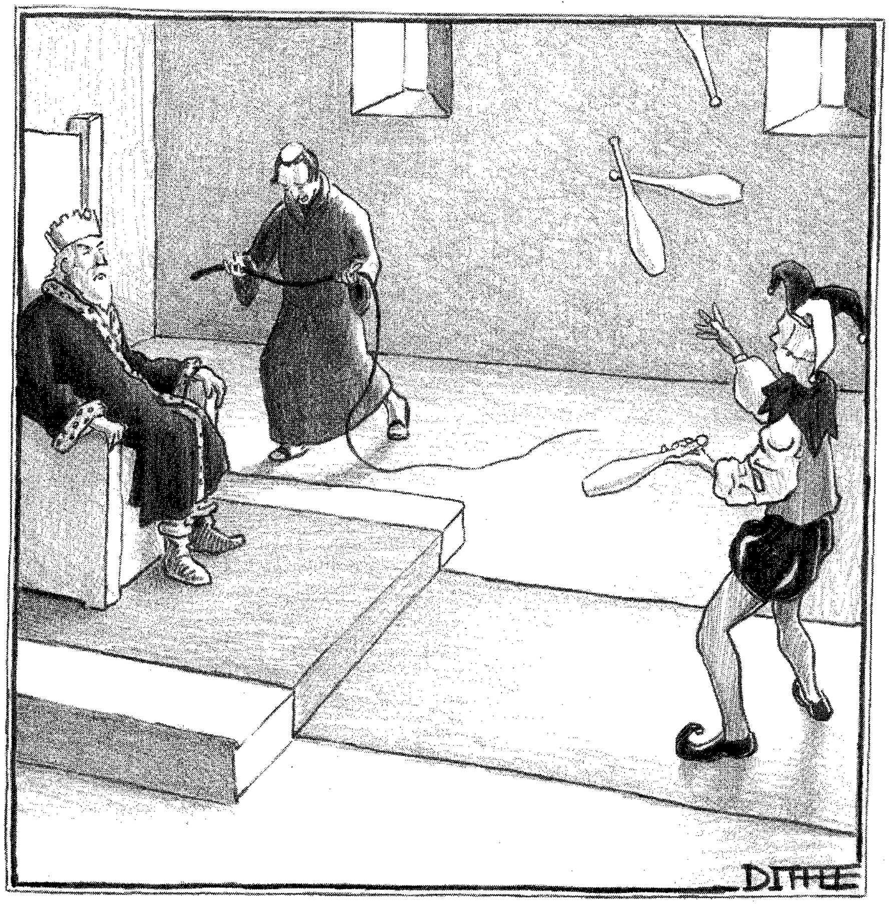

"Your remote control, sire."

• •

knees, but her coat was seriously in the way, and her bag—a flat, attractive, moderately expensive leather bag—thumped at her side. She considered letting it go, dropping it through the space in the tracks and forgetting it. Were things that bad? She backed up and left the bag on the ledge she'd been clinging to, just below the window of the cherrywood man. He seemed to be gone. She considered taking off her coat but was afraid to move that drastically, afraid that its breadth might make a sail in the wind and pull her down. She opened the coat, got back down on her knees, and with one hand yanked the skirt of the coat up behind her, folded over on itself, so that it was out of the way. She began crawling toward Jerry, stopping twice to refold the skirt of the coat.

Jerry was leaning over, clutching his ankle with his free hand. Con didn't know what she could do for him, but she continued toward him. At last, he reached forward and touched her shoulder.

"Be careful. We'll both fall," she said.

"We won't fall. There isn't room to fall," Jerry said. "Kids come up here all the time. If they fell down and died, you'd have read about it in the paper."

She ignored him. "Can you walk?" she said.

She heard the sound of a window opening. "I called the cops," the man with the broad forehead said, leaning out.

"We're going to be arrested," Con said.

"At least the cops will get us down first," Jerry said.

"But I don't want to be arrested," Con said. It was too absurd—mother, father, and daughter running afoul of the law in the same week. She'd die of humiliation. She'd be disbarred. Jerry looked cleaner than she felt, almost dapper, his white shirt still looking crisp through his open raincoat. He smiled at her. "It's going to be O.K.," he said. "Then we'll get married again."

"I don't think so," Con said. She got down on her hands and knees again, and began crawling back. She looked ahead instead of down. The tracks might be poorly fastened. The fastenings would have loosened over the years, and wouldn't have been kept in repair. Con and Jerry's combined weight might send the whole section, with them on top, crashing down.

"The cops are on their way over," the man called.

Con reached the window and looked up at the man, like an actress playing a dog or a cat. She had an impulse to say, "Woof." Then, as the man watched, she moved her hands up the short walls at the side of the tracks, so as to get upright again. Jerry was crawling behind her. "My husband is crazy," she heard herself say. "I'm sorry. He's a historian."

"You're not allowed to be out there," the man said.

She said, "Of course not. It's not safe. He's nuts, and now he's hurt. Can we come through your apartment to get down? He can't get down the way we came up."

"I don't know if I can let you do that," the man said. "I don't know anything about you."

"I live on Sterling Place," Con said. She almost said that Jerry lived in Philadelphia, but remembered that she had called him her husband. "We live on Sterling Place. Prospect Heights?"

The man considered. "My brother lives near there," he said, as if that proved something. "Wait." He closed the window.

"I don't know if I can make it down," Jerry said. "This ankle is killing me."

"He'll be back," Con said. The man returned and opened the window again. Con retrieved her bag and brushed off her coat as best she could, then made her way over the sill. "I'm sorry to be so dirty," she said. When she got inside, the man was standing to the side—not blocking her path but leaning against his stove—holding a knife pointed at her. She turned, raising her hand, to tell Jerry to stay outside. Maybe he could scream. Maybe the cops had really been called, and would arrest but also protect them.

"I'm sorry, Ma'am," the man said. "I have to be sure. You can't be too careful."

Con stood still, studying him, then understood. "You think we're going to hurt you?" she said.

"I let you into my home," the man said.

This was true. "It's all right," she said to Jerry, who climbed onto the sill and sat there for a moment. He couldn't put weight on the injured ankle and had to try several times before, with a cry, he ended up on his hands and knees on the man's kitchen floor. Now Con supported him as he stood. With the cherrywood man remaining where he was—apparently protecting his stove—they moved side by side, leaning together, across the kitchen, through a sparsely furnished, extremely clean living room, and out into the corridor. There was no elevator, and it took them a few moments to figure out how to get down the stairs. Finally, Jerry hopped, and Con waited below to steady him if he started to tumble. At last they reached the downstairs lobby, crossed it, and, leaning together, made their way outside, stared at by two middle-school kids. "Where's the subway?" Jerry said. "We'll never get a cab around here." It wasn't far. Like Marcus Ogilvy's train line that never was, they reached Broadway Junction and, a long time later, Jerry hobbled into Con's apartment, leaning on her arm.

She installed him on the sofa with an ice pack and the TV remote, then poured herself some Scotch. Glass in hand, she returned to the living room. As she began to speak, her hands seemed to become lighter, harder to control, so she had to put her drink down on a bookcase. She wanted to touch him, but didn't. Her hands—not the rest of her—wanted to touch him. Her hands had acquired a layer of softer but more highly charged air than that in the rest of the atmosphere; they had their own opinion. She pressed them to her sides. "You need more ice?" she said. "Or some Scotch?"

"A glass of water would be good." Jerry stared at the television screen. The gray-green knitted blob next to the sofa seemed larger than it had that morning. Six Americans had died in a helicopter crash in Iraq. Maybe Con would check the police report on Joanna's arrest, try to figure out if it was legal after all. She retrieved her drink. Her hands still felt lighter and larger than usual, pleasanter than the gray cold hands she'd carried for years. Again she didn't touch Jerry. She returned to the kitchen and drank, looking at her hands. ♦

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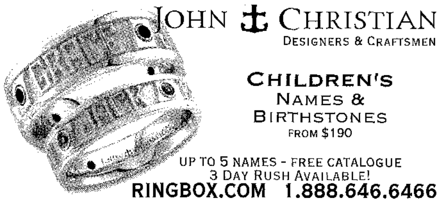
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Why is Clarence Thomas so angry?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

A touchstone of Clarence Thomas's career on the Supreme Court has been his hostility to what he calls élites. When the Court, in 2003, upheld the use of racial preferences in admissions at the University of Michigan Law School, Thomas dissented, writing, "All the Law School cares about is its own image among know-it-all elites." This past June, Thomas joined a majority of his colleagues in rejecting attempts by Seattle and Louisville to maintain diversity in their public schools, and wrote a separate concurring opinion to reflect his scorn for such plans. "Nothing but an interest in classroom aesthetics and a hypersensitivity to elite sensibilities justifies the school districts' racial balancing programs," he said. "If our history has taught us anything, it has taught us to beware of elites bearing racial theories."

This theme is expanded upon in Thomas's new memoir, "My Grandfather's Son" (Harper; $26.95). In his book, Thomas is clear about whom he blames for the pain of his confirmation hearings, when he had to defend himself against Anita Hill's accusations. "In one climactic swipe of calumny," Thomas writes, "America's elites were arrogantly wreaking havoc on everything my grandparents had worked for and all I'd accomplished in forty-three years of struggle."

Triumph over the élites, Thomas writes, took faith in God and, especially, courage. This, too, has been a longtime theme for him, and he elaborated upon it in the annual Francis Boyer lecture of the American Enterprise Institute on February 13, 2001. Only two months after Bush v. Gore, the cream of the new Administration, led by Vice-President Dick Cheney, gathered in black-tie to hear the Justice speak at a Washington hotel. Thomas was going to share with them his reflections on "the question of courage in American political life."

"Too many show timidity today precisely when courage is demanded," Thomas asserted. He told the group that he had suffered the consequences for speaking out on "a number of sacred policies, such as affirmative action, welfare, school busing." Those "who challenge accepted wisdom should expect to be treated badly. Nonetheless, they must stand undaunted," he said, before concluding, "Today, as in the past, we will need a brave 'civic virtue,' not a timid civility, to keep our republic. So, this evening, I leave you with the simple exhortation: 'Be not afraid.' "

On this night, in other words, Thomas, while celebrating the courage to speak unpopular truths, was telling some of the most powerful people in the worlds of government, business, and finance precisely what they wanted to hear—that affirmative action was bad, that black people didn't want or need their help, that government did more harm than good. *Be not afraid.* Indeed, throughout his judicial career Thomas has, in the name of anti-élitism, shown a distinct solicitude for certain kinds of élites—say, for employers over employees, for government over individuals, for corporations over regulators, and for executioners over the condemned. Thomas's tender concern for the problems of the powerful reveals itself, in the end, as a form of self-pity.

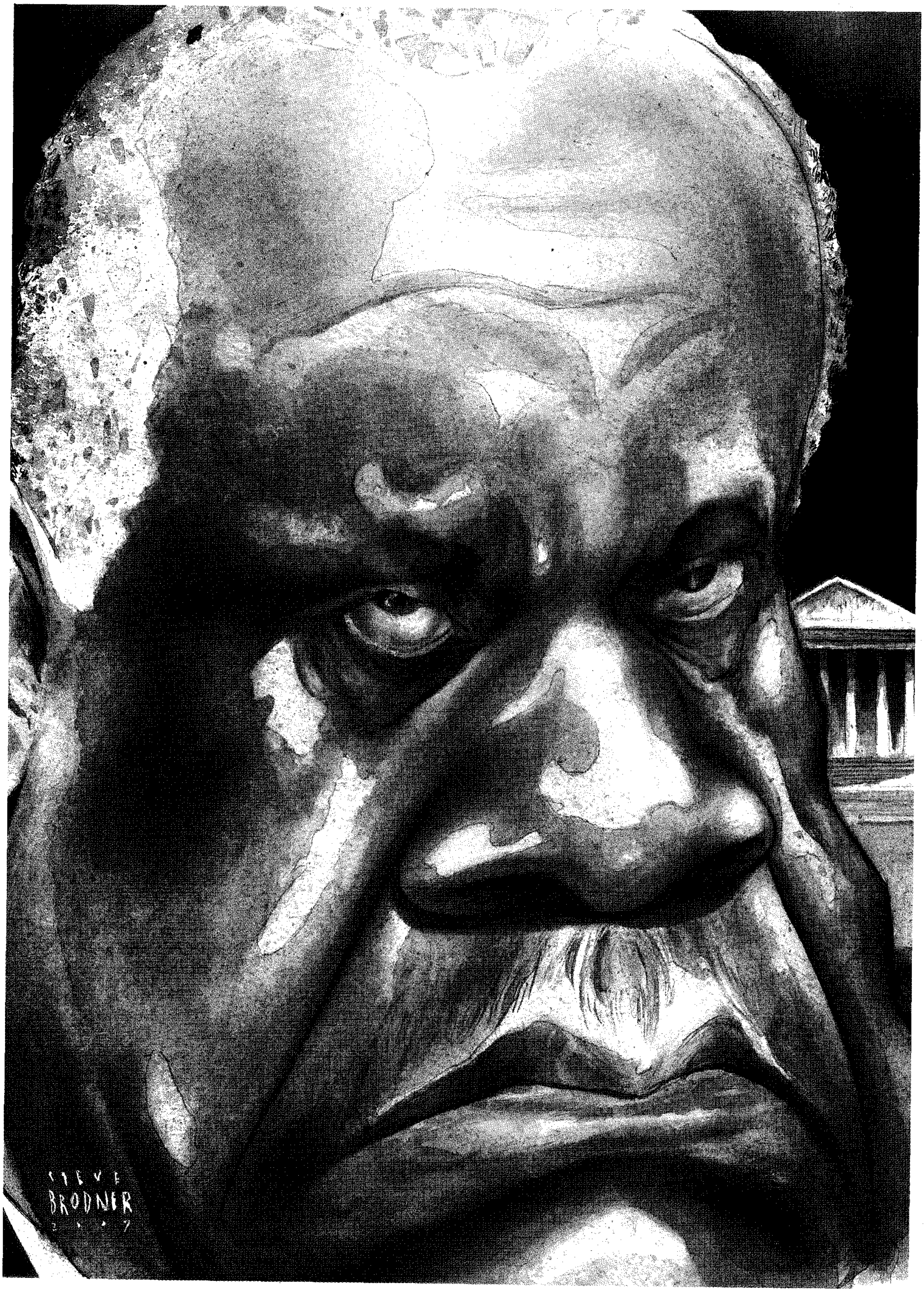
When President George H. W. Bush nominated Thomas to the Supreme Court, in 1991, the future Justice and his handlers relied on what became known as the "Pin Point strategy" to win his confirmation. They would focus on Thomas's hardscrabble upbringing in the small Georgia town of Pin Point in order to deflect questions about his political and judicial philosophy. This, too, is the guiding principle of "My Grandfather's Son."

Thomas vividly portrays the pain and confusion of his early years. He and his younger brother were born in Pin Point, and their father, known as C, quickly disappeared from the family's life. Thomas's mother, who was called Pigeon, struggled to care for her two young sons, first in Pin Point and later in the slums of Savannah, but, ultimately, when Clarence was seven, she took them to live with her father and his wife. All of the two boys' possessions fit into a pair of grocery bags.

Myers Anderson, Pigeon's father, made the raising of Clarence and his brother his life's work. Anderson owned a beat-up old truck and earned a living by running a small delivery service—of firewood, fuel oil, coal, and ice—for black customers in segregated Savannah. On the day the boys moved into his house, Anderson told them, "The damn vacation is over." The boys had plenty to eat and their own beds—neither of which they had had with their mother—but the man they called Daddy imposed a life of grim discipline. Chores and schoolwork had priority over everything else in the Anderson household, and Myers never wanted to hear any excuses. "Old Man Can't is dead—I helped bury him," he would tell his grandsons. Thomas notes, "He never praised us, just as he never hugged us." Beatings with belt or switch were frequent. Eventually, Thomas writes, Anderson bought a new truck for his business, but he took out the heater. "The warmth, he said, would only make us lazy."

Anderson, a convert to Roman Catholicism, sent his grandsons to parochial schools and saw that they became altar boys. In 1964, at sixteen, Thomas enrolled in a local seminary as one of two black students. Three years later, after ex-

STEVE BRODNER


STEVE
BRODNER
2007

"Mere confirmation, even to the Supreme Court," Thomas says, "seemed pitifully small compensation for what had been done to me."

celling in high school, he moved away from the South for the first time, enrolling at Immaculate Conception Seminary, in northwest Missouri. The plan was for him to continue his studies for the priesthood, and he again did well in his schoolwork, but an event interceded that changed his career plans. Spurred by one of the few other black students, Thomas began to notice that the Catholic Church had said little about persistent racism in America. That silence gnawed at him. On the day that Martin Luther King was shot, he heard a classmate say, "That's good. I hope the son of a bitch dies." "His brutal words finished off my vocation—and my youthful innocence about race," Thomas writes. He soon resolved to leave the seminary.

When Thomas told his grandfather that he was abandoning the priesthood, Anderson threw him out of their house in Savannah, and their relationship never recovered. The confluence of events—the death of King, the reaction at his school, the breach with Daddy—shattered Thomas's world. "At long last I felt the blind, self-destructive rage that haunted so many of the people I knew," he writes. "Every southern black had . . . felt the rage that threatened to burn through the masks of meekness and submission behind which we hid our true feelings." He transferred to Holy Cross, in Worcester, Massachusetts, but his rage remained.

To this point, Thomas's memoir comports with a familiar American archetype, that of the determined outsider who, by dint of intelligence and hard work, transcends the meagre circumstances of his birth. It's how James Gatz became Jay Gatsby. What follows, though, is something different, a story that reflects a precise moment in American history. In each subsequent step of Thomas's life—at Holy Cross, at Yale Law School, in his career in Washington, first as a staffer for Senator John Danforth and then in the Reagan Administration—Thomas made the most of his opportunities, opportunities he was given, as he more or less acknowledges, because he was black. Thomas came of age at a time when broad swaths of American society thought it was time for African-Americans to be given chances that had been denied to their forebears. To be sure, all that Thomas received in these places was a leg up, and he succeeded each time based on his own skills. Thomas's career looks like a model of how affirmative action is supposed to work. But that isn't how Thomas sees it.

THE JAPANESE GARDEN

The Japanese garden
is tilting quietly uphill—

eleven wet green stones,
bamboo, and ferns—

It might be under water,
the birds be fish, colored in. And you,

masked reader: the glance
of your underwater lamp,

your blackwater embrace—
not bought or sold.

—*Jean Valentine*

Starting in 1968, when he arrived at Holy Cross, as one of the few black students to be admitted, Thomas began a tortured passage between extremes in racial politics. As a college student, Thomas adopted the poses and rhetoric of the Black Power movement—the Afro and the overalls—along with a sense of being among "the aggrieved and the righteous." Yet even at Holy Cross, he writes, he saw how civil-rights activism led to the admission of unqualified minority students (some of whom flunked out), and he bridled at the mindless separatism implicit in such ideas as a "black corridor" in a dormitory. His reaction is a wild swing in the other direction: his anger at racism became an equally intense resentment of efforts to help African-Americans. "I already knew that the rage with which we lived made it hard for us to think straight," he writes. "Now I understood for the first time that we were *expected* to be full of rage. It was our role—but I didn't want to play it anymore."

When Thomas went on to Yale Law School, though, his rage grew. The young law student quickly came to resent the fact that he had benefitted from preferential admissions. "As much as it stung to be told that I'd done well in the seminary *despite* my race, it was far worse to feel that I was now at Yale *because* of it," he writes. "I was bitter toward the white bigots whom I held responsible for the unjust treatment of blacks, but even more bitter toward those ostensibly unprejudiced whites who pretended to side with black people while using them to further their own political and social ends." Thomas never explains what Yale did to him that was so terrible. When he didn't receive the job offers he wanted from law firms, he interpreted the slight as reflecting what "a law degree from Yale was worth when it bore the taint of racial preference." He does not consider that, in the early nineteen-seventies, major law firms simply might not have wanted black lawyers—reflecting the very racism that affirmative action was designed to combat. Later, Thomas peeled a fifteen-cent sticker off a package of cigars and put it on the frame of his law degree. "I never did change my mind about its value," he writes.

Again, though, Thomas began his legal career in a series of jobs that, as he says, "bore the taint of racial preference." Indeed, it seems that he has never had any other kind of job. Danforth, then the attorney general of Missouri, hired him out of Yale as a lawyer on his staff, and after a few years Thomas moved on to the legal department at Monsanto. In 1979, after Danforth was elected to the Senate, he invited Thomas to go with him to Washington. With Ronald Reagan's election a year later, Thomas received a surprise job offer to join the Administration as the assistant secretary for civil rights in the Department of Education. As at Yale, Thomas knew that the invitation was the result of his race, that he had been "singled out solely because I was black, which I found degrading." Nevertheless, Thomas took the job and, a year later, when he was thirty-three years old, received a promotion to lead the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Though Thomas doesn't say so directly, it's clear that he was given the job because he was black.

For almost eight years, Thomas seems to have done a competent job running the E.E.O.C. Reagan's people had, in a model demonstration of affirmative action, looked beyond the traditional candidates for leadership positions, and taken a chance on Thomas, and he had done as well as any white executive could have been expected to do. But, as Thomas moved through the hierarchy of Republican Administrations, the paternalism didn't seem to bother him anymore—or else he found it convenient to pretend that it did not exist. Thomas's rhetoric against traditional civil-rights dogma became more strident, even as he became an ever more prominent beneficiary of it. In other words, Yale and Reagan treated him the same way, but he hates one and reveres the other. Thomas never acknowledges, much less explains, the contradiction.

This omission becomes even more glaring when Thomas begins to discuss his judicial career. In 1989, he was hardly an obvious candidate for the court of appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which is generally regarded as second in importance only to the Supreme Court. Just forty-one years old, Thomas had never tried a case, or argued an appeal, in any federal court, much less in the high-powered D.C. Circuit; the last time Thomas had appeared in any courtroom was when he was a junior attorney in Missouri; he had never produced any scholarly work; his tenure at the E.E.O.C., although respectable, did not mark him as a notable innovator in the federal bureaucracy. He was, in short, a black conservative in an Administration with very few of them. That's why he got the job.

And that's also why, in 1991, after Thomas had been a judge for just sixteen months, Bush named him to replace Thurgood Marshall on the Supreme Court. At a press conference in Kennebunkport, when the President introduced Thomas to the nation, Bush said that the young judge was "the best qualified" nominee for the Court—a self-evidently preposterous statement. Indeed, in his book Thomas says, "Even I had my doubts about so extravagant a claim," so he took it upon himself to ask C. Boyden Gray, Bush's White House counsel, if he had been picked because he was black. According to Thomas, "Boyden replied that in fact my race had actually worked against me." Gray said that Bush had originally planned to have Thomas replace Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., but Brennan had quit earlier than expected, in 1990, and Thomas was not yet regarded as ready for the promotion. As Thomas recalls the conversation with Gray, he said that the Bush Administration wanted "to avoid appointing me to what was widely perceived as the court's 'black' seat." But, of course, that is precisely what Bush did, and it is inconceivable that a young white lawyer who headed a modest federal agency would have been similarly rushed onto the Supreme Court. In the light of this conversation with Gray, though, Thomas declares that his race worked against him as a potential judicial appointee. It is hard to tell whether this is self-delusion or dishonesty.

Throughout much of the book, especially the first half, Thomas paints an unsparing portrait of the way he conducted his personal life. Well into adulthood, he was incapable of managing his financial affairs. In one excruciating scene, which takes place when he was the director of the E.E.O.C., he stands at a rent-a-car counter at Logan Airport, in Boston, while the clerk, after running a check on Thomas's credit card, is directed to cut it into pieces on the spot. Nor does Thomas make many claims for himself as a husband to his first wife, whom he met at Holy Cross and had separated from before he started at the Department of Education. Most notably, Thomas portrays himself as something close to an alcoholic. From the Ripple wine he drank in his youth to the Scotch and Drambuie he abused as an adult, Thomas frankly admits to using alcohol to deaden the pain and anger that dominated his life. (He writes that he stopped drinking cold turkey during his tenure at the E.E.O.C.) In a brief aside, he admits to discussing pornography while he was a law student.

This candor is in striking contrast to his discussion of Anita Hill. Thomas's portrait of the woman he calls his "most traitorous adversary" is venomous and implausible. When she became a public figure, Hill was widely portrayed as demure, God-fearing, and politically moderate. According to Thomas, she was none of those things. In his initial interview of her, at the Department of Education, in 1981, he claims, Hill said that she "detested" Ronald Reagan, but Thomas hired her anyway, as a favor to a friend. She followed Thomas to the E.E.O.C., and left in 1983. It was during this period, she later alleged, that Thomas made his unwelcome remarks to her. ("Who has put pubic hair on my Coke?" and the like.) Thomas denies these claims, and dismisses the extensive corroborating evidence for them—including the fact that three friends of Hill's recalled her complaints about him at the time, and that another subordinate of Thomas's at the E.E.O.C. described similar behavior. But it's worth noting that many of the incidents took place at a time when Thomas was, by his own admission, drinking heavily, single and dating, and generally in despair about his personal life. By the time Thomas met his second wife, Virginia, in 1986, with whom he has clearly been very happy, Hill had left the agency to teach law at Oral Roberts University (an unlikely destination for someone who was, as Thomas has it, a godless, partisan Democrat). Even on the evidence presented in his own book, Thomas engages in characteristic overstatement when he writes of Hill's accusations, "I was one of the least likely candidates imaginable for such a charge."

For Thomas, though, the confirmation hearings served as a metaphor for his larger struggles. "I refused to bow to the superior wisdom of the white liberals who thought they knew what was better for blacks," he writes. "Since I didn't know my place, I had to be put down." Sixteen years later, the hearings remain a fresh wound. At the time, in his own testimony, he memorably called the hearings "a high-tech lynching for uppity blacks," and in his book Thomas expands on the comment: "As a child in the Deep South, I'd grown up fearing the lynch mobs of the Ku Klux Klan; as an adult, I was starting to wonder if I'd been afraid of the wrong white people all along. My worst fears had come to pass not in Georgia but in Washington, D.C., where I was being pursued not by bigots in white robes, but by left-wing zealots draped in flowing sanctimony." After sixteen years' reflection, to compare the actions of Anita Hill's supporters with those of the K.K.K. reflects an inability to draw distinctions, not least because Thomas, unlike most of those targeted by the Klan, won his battle with his pursuers. Apparently, it did not feel that way to him. Thomas writes in his memoir, "Mere confirmation, even to the Supreme Court, seemed pitifully small compensation for what had been done to me."

"My Grandfather's Son" scarcely mentions Thomas's work on the Supreme Court. Before arriving at the Court, he had said little about what kind of Justice he would be; indeed, thanks to the Pin Point strategy, the pre-Anita Hill portion of his confirmation hearings had been close to a farce. Drawing a lesson from Robert Bork's confirmation hearings, which had taken place four years earlier, Thomas declined to express his views on judicial issues, portraying himself as simply open-minded about matters of constitutional interpretation. (In a well-known exchange with Senator Patrick Leahy, Thomas asserted that he not only had no views about Roe v. Wade but had never in his life discussed the case.) "As for the matter of my judicial philosophy, I didn't have one—and didn't want one," he writes piously, explaining his reluctance to answer the senators' questions about his views: "A philosophy that is imposed from without instead of arising organically from day-to-day engagement with the law isn't worth having. Such a philosophy runs the risk of becoming an ideology, and I'd spent much of my adult life shying away from abstract ideological theories that served only to obscure the reality of life as it's lived." Almost immediately after arriving on the Court, Thomas began expressing a quite well-honed judicial philosophy—one that reflects the most deeply felt ideology on the Court.

Thomas's ideology is originalism; that is, he believes that the Constitution should be interpreted in accord with what he sees as the original intent of the framers. Eight months after Thomas joined the Court, in 1992, it issued its famous Casey decision, in which five Justices upheld what they called the "central holding" of Roe v. Wade, and thus preserved some constitutional protection for a woman's right to abortion. In that case, Thomas joined Antonin Scalia's dissenting opinion, which, on the basis of an originalist reading of the Constitution, called for Roe to be overturned. (Thomas had not shared with the Senate Judiciary Committee either his originalism or his hostility to Roe.)

The early alliance with Scalia has long prompted speculation that Thomas merely parrots the views of his fellow-conservative, but that has never been the case. Scalia calls himself a "faint-hearted" originalist, because contemporary conditions sometimes influence his reading of the Constitution. But there is nothing faint-hearted about Thomas's approach. For example, as long ago as 1995 he was asserting that much of the New Deal, and thus much of the contemporary work of the federal government, was unconstitutional. In a case where a conservative majority of Justices invalidated part of the Gun-Free School Zones Act, which prohibited the possession of firearms near schools, Thomas wrote separately to say that the Court had not gone far enough, and indicated his interest in undertaking "a fundamental reexamination of the past 60 years." Not since the nineteen-thirties had a Supreme Court Justice embraced such a narrow conception of federal powers.

Like most judicial conservatives, Thomas criticizes liberal Justices for using the Constitution to promote their "policy preferences." But, as Thomas's book clearly demonstrates, he has sought to enshrine in the Constitution his own policy preferences—the ones he learned from his grandfather.

This is especially true on the question of race. In his testimony at his confirmation hearing, as well as in his book, Thomas boasted about his independent thinking on the subject of race. In a speech to a black lawyers' group in 1998, he said that he had learned "to assert my right to think for myself, to refuse to have my ideas assigned to me as though I was an intellectual slave because I'm black." It is true that Thomas lives in isolation from much of the African-American community, and that in his first eight years on the Supreme Court only one of his clerks was black. But no one questions Thomas's right to think for himself; it is the substance of his ideas that draws criticism.

On the question of race, Thomas has elevated the child-rearing methods of Myers Anderson into a constitutional command. Like Scalia, Thomas believes that the Constitution is "color-blind," meaning that all government efforts to assist racial minorities—all forms of affirmative action—are unlawful. Thomas opened his dissenting opinion in the Michigan Law School case by quoting words of Frederick Douglass's that might have been his grandfather's: "If the negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also." This approach may have much to commend it as a child-rearing technique, but Thomas would make it mandatory. In the same opinion, Thomas dismisses diversity as "a faddish slogan of the cognoscenti," but it is one that has been endorsed in state houses and school boards whose leaders, unlike Supreme Court Justices, are democratically elected. Thomas pays them no mind. "Old Man Can't is dead" —so, according to the Justice, says the Constitution.

The Thomas of his memoir—seething, aggrieved, wounded—contrasts with the genial and cheerful Justice who today walks the corridors of the Supreme Court Building. It is true that Thomas maintains a drowsy silence through the Court's oral arguments; for the term that began in October, 2006, and ended in June, 2007, through scores of cases, Thomas did not ask the lawyers a single question. But he has become comfortable in the job, and, at the age of fifty-nine, plans to serve for many more years.

The tenor of Thomas's memoir, as well as his judicial record, suggests that he will continue to display his brand of "courage"—that is, to serve the interests of a conservative élite, and hearten Vice-President Cheney and his ideological kin with his exhortation "Be not afraid." As Thomas has often said, it is a credit to the country that a man from Pin Point can be given the opportunity to serve on the highest court in the land. "As a child, I could not dare dream that I would ever see the Supreme Court, not to mention be nominated to it," he said on the day he was selected. There is less to celebrate in the way that Thomas has used the opportunity to speak power to truth. ♦

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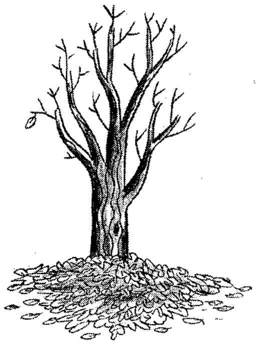
An audio interview with Jeffrey Toobin.

BRIEFLY NOTED

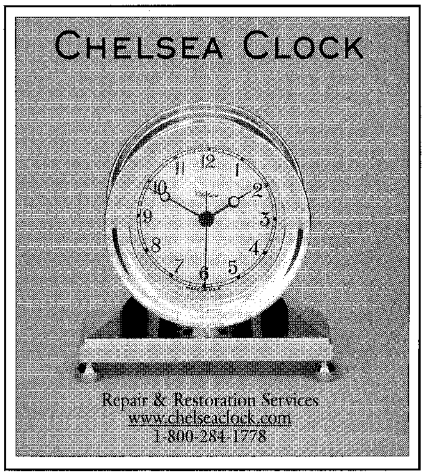
The Abstinence Teacher, *by Tom Perrotta (St. Martin's; $24.95).* Perrotta has made himself a specialist in suburban angst, peopling his novels with lonely daydreamers who are sexually dissatisfied and certain that their best days are over. In his latest, a high-school sex-ed teacher runs afoul of the local Evangelicals by informing her students that "some people enjoy" oral sex. After grudgingly accepting a new, chastity-based curriculum, she's aghast to discover that her daughter's handsome soccer coach is proselytizing to the team—with success. He's also a reformed drug addict, and stymied by a humdrum marriage, which not even a manual called "Hot Christian Sex" can spice up. Is it any surprise that these two find themselves in an uneasy attraction? Perrotta wants to show that liberals can be as intolerant as their ideological opposites, but it's an obvious point, and once it's been made the wheels just spin.

An Arsonist's Guide to Writers' Homes in New England, *by Brock Clarke (Algonquin; $23.95).* Sam Pulsifer, the "bumbling" narrator of this shambling, self-consciously comic novel, served ten years in prison after two people died when he accidentally burned down Emily Dickinson's house. Out of jail, he marries, has kids, and gets a suburban home in a town called Camelot, but his past comes back to haunt him when the son of his victims returns for revenge. As the historic homes of Robert Frost, Edward Bellamy, and Mark Twain are set ablaze, Clarke presents a madcap array of suspects, including a gang of wayward bond analysts and Sam's father's mistress. A deadpan satire of all things literary, Clarke's book has as its ultimate target the present-day hegemony of memoir—"the biggest section by far in the whole bookstore." In this he is dead-on, but his byzantine plot dulls an otherwise witty edge.



The Whisperers, *by Orlando Figes (Metropolitan; $35).* In this extraordinary study of a generation, Figes details the consequences of Stalin's ideological campaign to reorganize the self as rigidly as he reorganized the streets of Moscow. Using intimate oral histories gathered from hundreds of ex-Soviets, Figes explores the ways that Stalinism conflated individualism with deviance and campaigned against imagination, faith, and family ties. Mother and father became abstract, almost mythic notions, as parents were displaced by the state as the cynosure of the young. Ultimately, though, such primal relationships proved indissoluble. Figes provides lucid but minimal analysis of the testimonies, allowing them to reveal all the more vividly a people whose entire existence was defined by the taboo against private life, as well as the resilience, and resistance, of the human soul in the face of forcible reorientation.

A Nation of Counterfeiters, *by Stephen Mihm (Harvard; $29.95).* When Americans went shopping in the early eighteen-hundreds, they used paper money issued by any one of hundreds of banks—the country lacked a single paper currency—and both customer and banknote would be scrutinized before being accepted. The spuriousness of much of the money in circulation made it a rich era for counterfeiters, who, as Mihm writes in this revelatory, entertaining book, enjoyed a status somewhere between that of folk heroes and alchemists, forming a demimonde of criminal clans and master engravers. These were less reviled than "real" financiers whose speculations left notes worthless; many preferred a fake note bearing the name of a sound bank to one issued by a shaky, though legitimate, institution. The absurd apotheosis of this phenomenon came in the Civil War, when the Confederacy honored counterfeits of its own money. By then, the quest to "purify the currency" was inseparable from the effort to build a unified nation, and the Union victory put an end to the money madness.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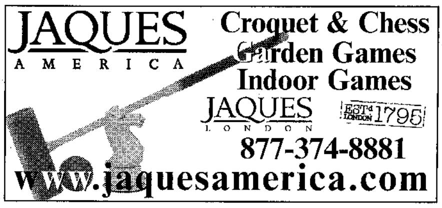
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ON TELEVISION

REANIMATOR

"Pushing Daisies" lives to tell the tale.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

"Pushing Daisies" is the third TV series created by Bryan Fuller, and, like the others, it has a title that's tailor-made for *Variety* headline writers in the event of the show's cancellation, the other two being "Dead Like Me," which ran for two seasons on Showtime (2003 and 2004), and "Wonderfalls," which Fuller created with Todd Holland, and which was pulled by Fox after only four episodes, in 2004. (Fuller, who made his bones as a writer and producer of "Star Trek: Voyager," was also the co-executive producer of NBC's popular drama "Heroes" in its first season.) At the moment, "Pushing Daisies" isn't in any danger of cancellation. It's one of the few distinctive shows of the fall season, and it currently anchors ABC's successful Wednesday-night lineup of new series, preceding "Private Practice"—the idiotic and unwatchable spinoff of the idiotic and watchable "Grey's Anatomy"—and "Dirty Sexy Money," a not quite delicious but passably cheesy drama about a rich family's secrets and lies, starring the imposing, white-maned Donald Sutherland (imposing even while playing a ridiculously stereotypical TV patriarch) and Peter Krause, resting from the hard work of "Six Feet Under" in the role of the family's handholder and scandal-cleaner-upper.

Anna Friel, Lee Pace, and Chi McBride investigate the mysteries of life.

PABLO LOBATO

Fuller's shows are often called quirky, and with good reason—they're a mash-up of the existential and the quotidian, and you can't predict the beats of the action or the tonal shifts. "Dead Like Me," a comedy and a drama, was about a sullen, unmotivated eighteen-year-old girl named George who is killed one sunny day by a falling toilet seat, dislodged from a space station, and is immediately conscripted into a team of grim reapers. It turns out that—at least, in the universe Fuller constructed—being dead is no easier than being alive: the reapers are expected to find apartments for themselves, do their own laundry, and get paying jobs. And conducting souls to the afterlife is a drag; there's so much to learn and so much to get wrong. But, in "Dead Like Me," Fuller didn't lazily equate life and death for easy comedy; the harshness of finality wasn't glossed over, though there were perhaps a few too many ghoulish one-liners. "Wonderfalls" (which is available on DVD, in a set that includes the thirteen episodes that had been filmed when the show was cancelled) is a little more whimsical, in that it takes place amid the camp tackiness of Niagara Falls and involves animal tchotchkes talking to a young woman, Jaye, who, though she's an Ivy League graduate with a degree in philosophy, is working in a souvenir shop and living in a trailer. Like George, Jaye is sullen and unmotivated, but she is also witty, which makes her pleasant company for the viewer. The tchotchkes give her instructions on how to help people—but the instructions are often cryptic or counterintuitive and lead to trouble. The show has a screwball feel, because Jaye's family is crazy, and there's also a romance. It's a rich mixture.

"Pushing Daisies" is as peculiar a creation as you're going to see this year. It's not like anything else, though as you watch it you can't help making a checklist of influences and progenitors: the Tim Burton of "Edward Scissorhands" and "Pee-wee's Big Adventure," David Lynch's "Twin Peaks," "Amelie," "Little Shop of Horrors," "Fractured Fairy Tales," real fairy tales, Roald Dahl, and Greek mythology. Every pixel in your TV screen has been accounted for in the show's obsessively imaginative production design, and the sound has the nutty specificity of the old Warner Bros. cartoons, where each stealthy footstep and shifty glance was denoted musically. It's a fast-moving tale, about a boy named Ned (Lee Pace), who discovers when he's nine that he can bring the dead back to life with his touch. But, as the narrator (Jim Dale) tells us portentously, that gift "came with a caveat or two." If Ned touches the newly alive person a second time, that person will die again, this time for good. And if he doesn't touch the person again within a minute, someone nearby will die. One of Ned's secrets is that as a child he—unwittingly—caused the father of the little girl next door to die; he loved the little girl, whose name was Chuck (Anna Friel), and twenty years later she resurfaces—he has brought her back to life—making his secret even more agonizing. Worse, he cannot touch her. He loves her, she loves him, and never the twain shall meet, except for the occasional kiss through a sheet of plastic wrap or an embrace while wearing beekeepers' suits. "Pushing Daisies," like "Dead Like Me" (and its rough coeval "Six Feet Under"), is poker-faced about the arbitrariness of life and death. In the first three minutes of the series, Ned's golden retriever gets killed by a truck and his mother keels over from a burst blood vessel in her brain while baking pies; both events are handled coolly, with no tears. You're more likely to be taking note of the art direction—the mother's pale-green apron against the pale-green-and-beige checked linoleum, and the boy in his pale-green striped shirt—than you are to be feeling anything about the fact that a nine-year-old boy's mother just died in front of him.

I think that Fuller wants to be more than clever in this show—it's a serious comedy about life and romance. And there are payoffs, though few of them materialize as quickly as you want them to. It wasn't until the fifth episode that I believed that the characters' feelings came from them instead of being imposed on them. Luckily, the structure of the show keeps it moving. Ned works with a private investigator, Emerson Cod (Chi McBride), on the side, solving murders. Cod is all about getting the job done. Chuck and Ned have eyes only for each other; Cod has his eye on the prize—the payday when they solve a case. McBride provides some much needed normal humor amid all the mannered wackiness of the show. A travel agency, for example, is called the Boutique Travel Travel Boutique—that kind of thing wears a viewer out.

"Pushing Daisies" probably shouldn't last longer than a season; fairy tales aren't supposed to go on forever. It will then take its place proudly beside other worthy efforts that lived fast, died young, and left behind a beautiful DVD. ♦

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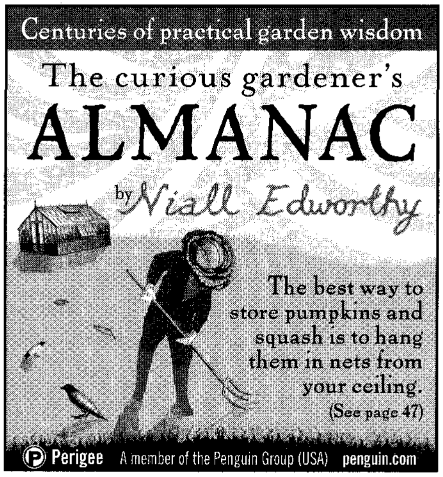
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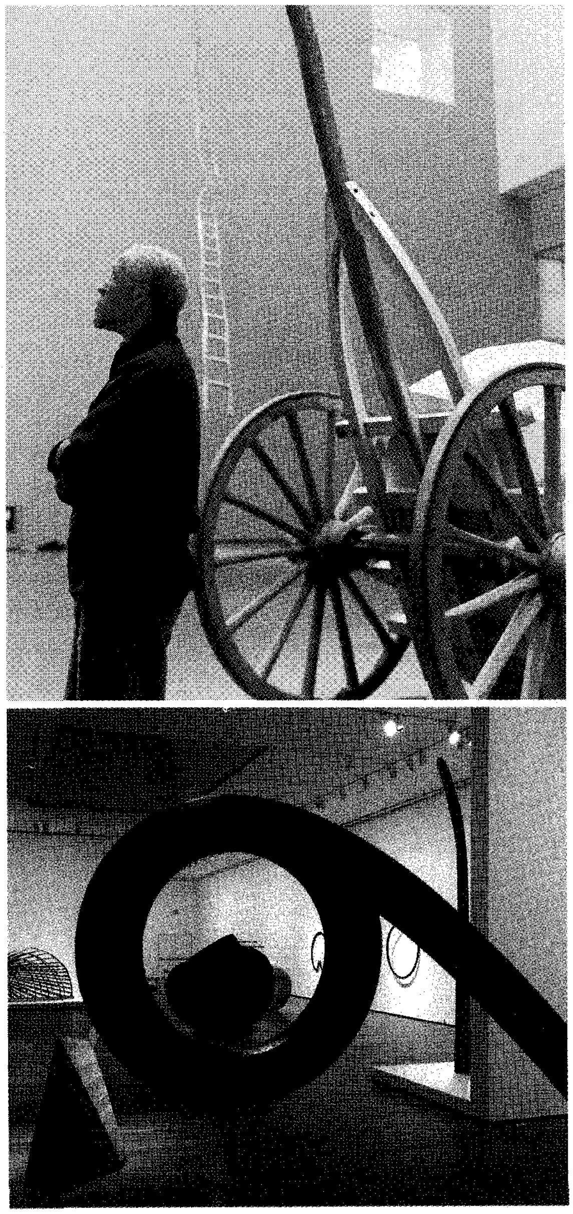
THE ART WORLD

SEEING THINGS

Shows of Martin Puryear and Georges Seurat.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Coming upon sculptures by Martin Puryear, the subject of a strong retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, is always an arresting pleasure, like entering a zone where time slows. I'm drawn into a relationship with something unique (the hardworking but unprolific Puryear almost never repeats himself, as if relaunching his career with each piece) which is both rawly physical and somehow fanciful. It's usually carved or carpentered wood, subtly evocative of animate, utilitarian, or architectural entities, and mysterious and friendly. As strange as a piece's form may be, it seems consolingly familiar, like a family friend who was often around in your childhood. It imparts a holiday feeling. In advance of the MOMA show, I wondered how Puryears, when displayed in quantity, could preserve their respective quotients of sweet surprise. Wouldn't they crowd one another? They don't. Each keeps its own counsel, cordially indifferent to its neighbors. Smallish works like "Mus" (1984), a reclining cone of black-painted spruce, domed with bent cedar slats and wire mesh, retain staunch authority, and big or even colossal ones—such as a new wheeled wagon of faceted lumber, whose uptilted wagon tongue is a slender ash trunk about sixty feet long—feel as intimate as whispers. The show reminds me that the frequent downfall of contemporary sculpture—since that art rashly abandoned pedestals and intruded on social space—has been the question of how anything can presume to be extra special just by showing up in a world that is already more than full enough. For Puryear, as for very few other sculptors who aren't overpowering minimalists, like Richard Serra—the gravely witty Englishman Richard Deacon, Puryear's peer as an inspired craftsman, comes to mind—it's not a problem, for reasons akin to personal charm and gravitas.



Puryear with works from the MOMA retrospective. Photographs by Yola Monakhov.

Puryear, who is African-American, was born in Washington, D.C., in 1941; his father was a postal employee and his mother taught in an elementary school. He grew up relishing science, haunting museums, and making things. (He has said, "If I became interested in archery, I made the bows and arrows; if I became interested in music, I made the guitar.") At the Catholic University of America, in Washington, he became a painter. In the mid-nineteen-sixties, while he was a Peace Corps volunteer in Sierra Leone, he learned woodworking from village craftsmen. Then, at the Royal Swedish Academy of Art, in Stockholm, he became alert to contemporary art, and studied techniques of Scandinavian wood design. In 1971, he graduated from Yale's School of Art and Architecture, with an M.F.A. in sculpture. After two years in Tennessee, teaching, and five in Brooklyn, he went to Chicago, where he also taught, and in 1990 he moved to his present home, in upstate New York. Starting in the late seventies, his fame grew internationally, augmented by such public commissions as a terrific skeletal lobe of stainless steel and bronze, "That Profile" (1997-99), at the Getty Center, in Los Angeles. Steeped in African and Asian art, as well as in the Baroque and the modern (including the work of Brancusi, Le Corbusier, and the minimalists), Puryear exercises a mastery that feels widely and deeply wise. His art is essentially abstract. He commonly eschews extrinsic meanings, despite the title "Ladder for Booker T. Washington," which was an afterthought to a wondrous piece—an undulant, tapering ladder, nearly thirty-seven feet high—suspended in MOMA's atrium. (For once, that wasteful space comes in handy.)

A typical Puryear is as tensed and silent as a held breath. Its form may seem more the idea of its materials than that of its maker. In "Thicket" (1990), square wooden shafts, pegged every which way, decide to mimic a shark's fin. "Brunhilde" (1998-2000), eight feet high, is a vaguely helmet-shaped, upside-down basket of ostensibly simple weave. But look: it's made up of glued cedar strips, fantastically labor-intensive. "Confessional" (1996-2000) presents a flat face of soiled wood, with odd bumps, holes, and a handle, on a ballooning shape of wire mesh smeared with tar, with a boat-shaped footprint. The work seems bent on going different places, physical and spiritual, at once. Its front is whatever side you're looking at. Puryears have no backs. He likes elements that rise and elements that dangle. "Le Prix" (2005) splits the difference, with an erect chain of wooden links and a ring, in the air, that suggests attachment to an invisible rod or hook. By these and myriad other stratagems, Puryear shows how to matter in the world: be interested and thereby, perhaps, interesting, as often and for as long as you can.

"Georges Seurat: The Drawings," also at MOMA, affords an exhausting encounter with radical beauty. Having consumed your attention, it will leave you feeling that you have only begun to understand pictures of people and places which appear simple enough—as deployments of massy darks and filmy lights, in black conté crayon on textured paper—but which induce states of aesthetic panic. You may be sure of what you looked at: the technique-obsessed Seurat—who died of diphtheria at thirty-one, in 1891, bequeathing to modern art a majestic paradigm of analytical style—makes a point of showing his hand. But what did you see? Double effects of illusion and objectness, image and stuff, grace and crudity afflict comprehension. I have in mind especially the drawings from an early period, 1882-84, which I want to call Seurat's best, even though they are less virtuosic and pretty than his studies related to "A Sunday at La Grande Jatte" (1884-86) and than some lyrical renderings of singers and crowds at café concerts, from 1886-88. In a sure-eyed essay in the show's catalogue, the art historian Richard Shiff writes of "meanders"—scribbles, really—with which, along with frenetic hatching, Seurat worked his precocious graphic spells. (Another expedient, inflecting crayoned surfaces with points of rolled paper, leather, or cork, has an even tangier name: "stumping.") Where nakedly visible, the gawky meanders add up to less than zero, expressively. They bespeak an audacious will to keep structural schemes and their execution mutually independent. Seurat's marks are like laborers who, for all they know, may be building a cathedral, a toolshed, or nothing. Later, he suppressed that dissonance in poetic fictions of figures melting in ambient radiance, just as he resolved a conflict in his paintings between stately figuration and finicky facture with drenching effulgences of color. But I love to throw my eye and mind at, for example, "The Veil" (1882-84), in which a woman's black hat and veil feel as dense as a cannonball atop her ghostly lower face, against a gray ground of flaccid lines. It knocks me silly.

Observe how Seurat depicts and contradicts physical weight. In "Locomotive" (1883-84), the mammoth vehicle and the smoke wafting from its stack register as what they are: the same clayey medium, with the same visual heft. The legs of the chair in "Man Sitting on a Terrace (Artist's Father)" (1884) are insolently wispy strokes beneath the thickly silhouetted figure. But the chair can't collapse, because it has been transposed from normal space, in which gravity works, to a parallel world of two dimensions. The man is secured to the drawing's surface, complete with red-herring hints of roundedness and spatial recession. We automatically try to read depth into passages of relative light around him. Seurat checks the effort with dragged scrims of crayon, befuddling the reflexes that interpret sight in our brains. As we study it, the drawing slackens its grip on imagination. The deftly described man in the chair becomes the idea of a man in a chair, and the picture asserts its identity as a peculiarly soiled piece of paper. All handmade images are material tricks, of course. (Take a magnifying glass to a Norman Rockwell, and you're in the same deep water.) Seurat's monumental achievement was to force the issue of what pictures are to a degree that, as Roberta Smith has noted in the *Times*, smashed the five-century reign of Renaissance perspective—incidentally bookending the career of the first master of the vanishing point, the also dazzling Masaccio, who died at the age of twenty-six, in 1428. At this show, you can feel as well as see the historic demolition taking place. ♦

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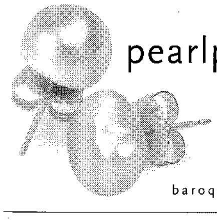

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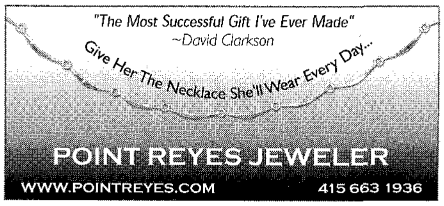

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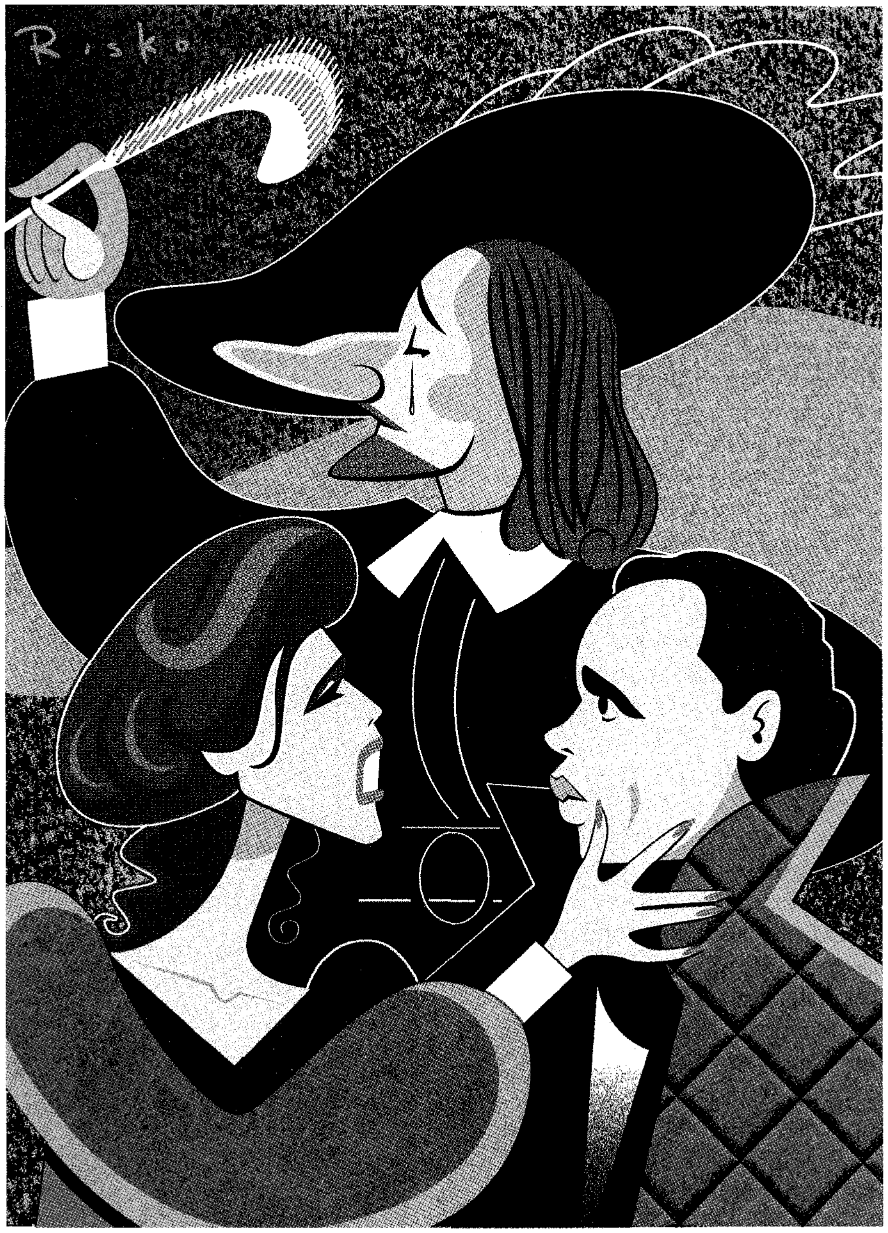
THE THEATRE

FIGHTING AND WRITING

The loved and the unlovable in "Cyrano de Bergerac."

BY JOHN LAHR



Jennifer Garner, Kevin Kline, and Daniel Sunjata in Edmond Rostand's pas de trois.

The word "panache" was adopted into English only after the phenomenal success of the French playwright Edmond Rostand's 1897 "heroic comedy" "Cyrano de Bergerac," whose flamboyant, big-nosed hero took revenge on his ugliness by making a legend of his physical and intellectual prowess. "I'm going to take the simplest approach to life of all. . . . I've decided to excel in everything," Cyrano announces in the current superb revival of the play (at the Richard Rodgers, under the deft direction of David Leveaux). "Panache" means, literally, the tuft of feathers on Cyrano's cap; figuratively, it refers to his sumptuous impertinence. The word is both Cyrano's dying breath and the play's last word—an epitaph, as well as an envoi, to his dandyism.

Cyrano (Kevin Kline), a nobleman serving in the French Army in the seventeenth century, is the consummate actor; he turns every occasion into an exhibition of aplomb. "I want to depart this life with honorable steel piercing my heart and a piercing epigram on my lips," he tells a cadet from his regiment, in this translation and adaptation by Anthony Burgess. Cyrano never picks a fight with one person when he can take on a hundred. Under siege, he crosses enemy lines to deliver his beautifully written love letters; when challenged to a duel, he fights and writes a poem at the same time, dispatching his opponent, as predicted, on the poem's last beat. He displays courage in order to disabuse himself of his fear. His every gesture is calculated to capture the imagination of others, stoicism turned into the spectacular. Cyrano is capable of feasting on half a grape and a glass of water—or, while he and his troops are starving on the front lines, of producing Homer's Iliad to feed his soul. His defiant excess—"Excess, you see, is not excessive when it's been conceived on principle," he says—is a purposeful statement of imaginative freedom and consolation. Instead of submitting to the rules, Cyrano makes them; he asserts his dignity over his destiny. Although his grotesque nose disqualifies him for the attention of women, his actions and his words demand an audience. Even before Cyrano makes his entrance, a chorus of whisperers spins the legend of his uniqueness: "extraordinary," "exquisite, one of the world's prodigies." Once he swaggers into view, he insists not only on being seen but on being remembered. At the theatre, he bullies a bad actor off the stage, throwing money, as well as epithets, after the inept mummer. This typical recklessness leaves Cyrano without cash to buy his own dinner. "A stupid act," someone observes. Cyrano counters, "But what a gesture."

And what a play—swashbuckling and subtle, breathtaking and heartbreaking. "To joke in the face of danger is the supreme politeness, a delicate refusal to cast oneself as a tragic hero," Rostand told the Académie Française in 1903. "Panache is therefore a timid heroism. . . . A little frivolous, perhaps, most certainly a little theatrical, panache is nothing but a grace; but a grace which is so difficult to retain in the face of death, a grace which demands

ROBERT RISKO

"so much strength." The psychology of "Cyrano de Bergerac" is as cunning as its storytelling; in the narrative of Cyrano's eloquent but unrequited love for his cousin Roxane (Jennifer Garner), the play traps a much deeper commentary on self-loathing and the humiliated heart. Cyrano's nose—which he calls his "gross protuberance"—is an offense both to others and to his own aesthetic ideal. By winkling out Cyrano's shame, the play speaks to the dark kingdom of unworthiness that monopolizes our inner lives as much as it does Cyrano's. The play, like its hero, is more serious about suffering than it lets on.

As Cyrano, Kline is sensational. His Shakespearean training—he has played both Falstaff and Lear in recent years—makes him an expert interpreter of Rostand's dexterous alexandrines. And, of all Kline's classical parts, Cyrano, with his decency and his desire to shine, seems to be the role best suited to his metabolism. Kline's humor is more of the head than of the belly; he is smart, witty, alert, vulnerable, and accomplished. The elegance of his comic playing reaches its apogee in the scene in which Cyrano, hidden from sight below Roxane's balcony, takes over for the tongue-tied Baron Christian de Neuvillette (Daniel Sunjata), who serves in his regiment and is the apple of Roxane's eye. In this iconic dramatic moment, which T. S. Eliot praised as "possibly poetry also," Rostand allows Cyrano's eloquence to ease Christian back into Roxane's cooling heart, showing in the process two souls forgetting themselves. "Ah, to die,/Death is all I need after this," Cyrano says, caught up in the spell of his own speech. "Summit gained. I ask one thing." The overeager Christian blurts out, "A kiss." Kline's backpedalling is well timed and hilarious. "Be quiet, Christian," he seethes. Roxane asks from above, "What are you saying?" "Myself was being angry with myself for going too far," Cyrano replies. Kline gets a big laugh with this line; the words, however, also telegraph a more profound division in Cyrano. It says something about the calibre of Kline's performance that, even in this farcical setup, as Cyrano and Roxane grasp each other's hands in the dark, our laughter freezes in our throats and is replaced by tears.

As Roxane, Jennifer Garner is every inch an object of desire. The costume designer Gregory Gale has dressed her in teal greens and ruby reds, warm rich colors that highlight her chestnut hair and the patrician outlines of her long neck and high cheekbones. Garner's smile is big magic; when Roxane beams it at Cyrano after she requests a meeting, only to beg protection for Christian—"Oh, how I love you. Oh, and tell him to write," she says—you feel the selfishness, the naïveté, the manipulativeness, the hurtfulness in her behavior, and, like Cyrano, you forgive her all of it. Garner has what Alexander Pope called "the fortune of a face"; her charismatic looks exist as an ironic contrast to the misfortune of Cyrano's. A woman who in real life has probably had more passes thrown her way than Randy Moss, Garner also has a lightness of comic touch and a feistiness that come through best when she rebukes Christian for having nothing more to say to her than a banal "I love you." "And how many times in my life do you think I've heard/That hot avowal, as articulate/As a tomcat howling for a temporary mate?" she says, working herself up into a fine, head-wagging fury.

Just as a dandy wants it both ways—to rebel against society and to be accepted by it on his own terms—so does Rostand. In the last act, he jumps fifteen years ahead, to a monastery where Roxane has rusticated herself after Christian's death and where Cyrano visits her every week, living out the old romantic formula of suffering without reward. Until Roxane susses that Cyrano is the author of Christian's letters, he never confesses his love; like the autumn leaves that contrive to "go in grace" as they fall, he also hides, at first, his mortal wound. For Roxane, he musters a rueful little joke. "I've missed everything—even my death," he says. But his loss is greater than that. By missing out on love, he has also missed out on life, or almost. "I never had much acquaintance with the sweetness of woman," he tells Roxane, finally speaking his heart. "But—and, God bless you for this, for ever and ever I have had one friend different from the few others." "I never loved but one man in my life," Roxane tells him. "Now I must lose him twice." Even in his dying, Cyrano, ever the dandy, dares with tact. "And make those tears which have been wholly his,/Mine too, just a little, mine," he says. That sad, modest wish—to be kept in mind—strikes a resounding note of grief and gratitude that echoes down the ages. ♦

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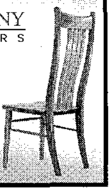

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

HUNTING GROUNDS

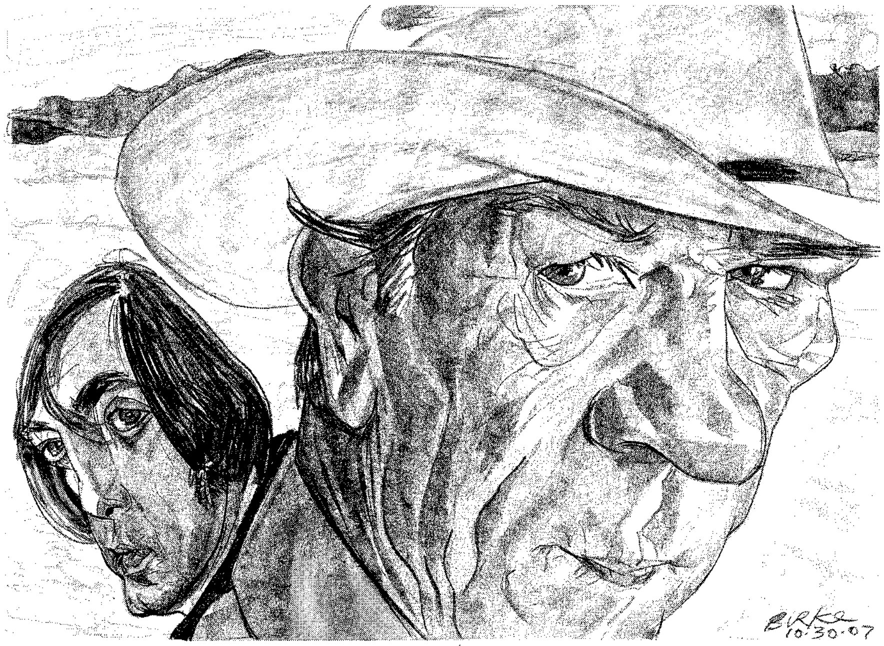
"No Country for Old Men" and "Lions for Lambs."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Coen brothers movie, "No Country for Old Men," is set in Texas, with a foray over the border into Mexico. The cinematography is by Roger Deakins, a trusted collaborator of the Coens', who holds the wide, camel-brown sweep of the Texas scrubland steady in the frame, as if he were filming the Serengeti. When a hunter named Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin) perches on a crag and trains his binoculars, or the telescopic sight of his rifle, on a herd on the plains below, we expect to see lions, not antelope. His shot misses, and the antelope leap away, but the next group in Moss's vision lies still: a litter of abandoned vehicles and, scattered among them, human bodies. How Moss reacts to the carnage—or, to be exact, how intensely he underreacts—determines the rest of the film. Where you or I would throw up and call the cops, he bides his time, checks the surroundings, then wanders down to the scene. A drug deal has gone viciously wrong; one man is still breathing, and he whispers for water, but Moss walks away, with something better in mind. He finds it—a black case packed with two million dollars. Not bad for a day's hunting.

What follows is an extended chase, with a number of interested parties joining the fray. There is Sheriff Bell (Tommy Lee Jones), whose eyes have seen everything in this corner of the world, and who wants the law to reach Moss before something less merciful finds him. Later, there is Carson Wells (Woody Harrelson), a hired hand, who prides himself on tracking down the most elusive prey. More stubborn than either of them is Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem). If you think the name is hard to place, try the rest of him. He is smiling, courteous, but essentially shorn of humor; his movements, though as careful and unhurried as a surgeon's, are bent not on the relief of pain but on its violent imposition; and his idea of fun is to weigh a man's life—should he perish, should he survive—on the toss of a coin. It is difficult to define what Chigurh wants from his own life. All we can say for sure is that he wants those two million bucks.

The film is adapted from Cormac McCarthy's novel of the same name, which in turn took its title from Yeats: "That is no country for old men. The young/In one another's arms, birds in the trees." No such vivacity—what Yeats calls the "sensual music" of the lusting world—haunts either the book or the film. True, there is a querulous speech by one of Bell's fellow-sheriffs from another county, railing against today's kids, "with green hair, bones through their noses," but the Texas that looms up through the movie is no country for young men, either. There is barely any music, sensual or otherwise, and Carter Burwell's score is little more than a fitful murmur. The story takes place in 1980, but cut out the cars and the drugs and we could be in 1880—look at Bell and his deputy, saddling up to scour the crime scene. ("You can't help but compare yourself against the old timers," Bell confides to us, in voice-over.) Indeed, the characters' rapport with the soil is more reliable, in its grounded primitivism, than their relations with one another, and the Coens certainly honor the novelist's abiding preference for the mythical over the modern. The most urgent pursuit comes not on a highway but down a rushing river, with a man being sought by a remorseless dog, as if by a hound from Hell.



Javier Bardem and Tommy Lee Jones in a new movie from the Coen brothers.

So what do we end up with? Well, as a thriller, "No Country for Old Men" is tight, pointed, and immune to the temptations of speed. I found myself in the same predicament with the film as with the book—approaching both in a state of rare excitement, yet willing myself, all too soon, to be more engaged than I actually was. If I want wry lawmen and smart, calculating fugitives, I'll get them from Elmore Leonard; and, if I want Leonard, I'll take him neat, rather than slow-filtered, drop by drop, through a layer of Faulkner, then laced with the Book of Jeremiah. That is how the novel sounded to me, at any rate, and McCarthy's bent for the apocalyptic—most naked in "The Road" (2006), a greater work by far—suffers a curious transformation in the hands of the Coens. It shrinks into a fatalistic fetishism: screws turned by knives, a cold bottle of milk still sweating from the fridge, dust tracks at the bottom of a ventilation shaft, and countless slowly spreading pools of blood.

PHILIP BURKE

Needless to say, you could call every one of those details as a witness to the Coens' powers of suspense, and "No Country for Old Men" is beyond question a return to the dark, simmering days of their best work, in "Blood Simple" and "Miller's Crossing." The travesty of recent years (how much would *you* pay not to watch "Intolerable Cruelty" or "The Ladykillers" again?) is all but wiped out by the new film, although, as with those two fumbles at comedy, there remains a nagging sense that the Coens are not so much investing their emotions in a cinematic genre—in this case, the Western revenge drama—as picking it up, inspecting it, and then setting themselves the task of constructing a perfect copy. Acts of monstrosity are coolly perpetrated throughout, but the resulting film strays beyond cool to the verge of the passionless; if Deakins's camera leans in close to gaze on damaged flesh (we focus on Chigurh's leg as he swabs and stitches a gunshot wound), that is not because the Coens harbor any tenderness or pity, still less an urge to lament the legacy of violence. They simply retain a juvenile weakness for gore, challenging us to match their sang-froid and saluting Chigurh himself for showing the way.

There is no denying that Javier Bardem cuts a singular figure. For one thing, he currently has the biggest, noblest, and most sculpted head of anyone in movies (previous titleholders include John Huston), and I can never quite suppress the thought, watching him onscreen, that he must have flown straight to the set from Easter Island. So why burden him, for this film, with a helmetlike hair style that makes him look like the fifth Monkee? The answer is that Chigurh is less a person than a conceit: an angel of death, stalking the landscape like a plague. As with his weapon of choice—a stun gun, powered by compressed gas, of the type normally used in the slaughter of cattle—the hair is a design quirk, filling in for a character trait. The movie charts no moral shift in Chigurh, or indeed in the men around him; all of them are set in stone from the beginning (Sheriff Bell appears to be *made* from stone), and we gradually realize that "No Country for Old Men" is not telling a tale—the plot remains open-ended—but reinforcing the legend of a place, like a poem adding to an oral tradition. Texas is presented as a state of being, where good and evil circle doggedly around each other, and it just doesn't occur to Moss that he could take his black bag, catch a flight, and seek a world elsewhere. I was awed by the control of the movie, which seems as pressurized as Chigurh's murder machine, but after an hour and a quarter I felt that it had made its point and done all the damage it could. In the event, it crawls past the two-hour mark, and you sense that the Coens, like their unkillable villain, are prepared to go on forever.

We were promised a spate of intelligent, probing films about America's wars abroad, and about the implications for life back home, but results so far have been ragged. To be fair, directors face a heavy task. How can you explore the policy debate over Afghanistan, say, without having your movie sound like a policy debate? To judge by "Lions for Lambs," the answer is: You can't.

Robert Redford's film, written by Matthew Michael Carnahan, is braided from three strands, like a rope. First, an eager young senator in Washington (Tom Cruise) reveals a new military initiative to a skeptical reporter (Meryl Streep). Second, we watch that initiative in practice, as a pair of front-line troops (Derek Luke and Michael Peña) are left wounded on an Afghan mountain in the snow, with the Taliban closing in. Third, we listen to a professor (Robert Redford) who taught the two soldiers at college, where they were close friends, while he tells a fun-loving student (Andrew Garfield) to get off his backside and engage with the world.

The three stories are intercut throughout the film, to lend it at least the illusion of momentum. Sadly, unless you are Jean-Luc Godard, the sight of your characters discussing the political ethics of their own actions is unlikely to ravish the eye, and "Lions for Lambs" is most charitably described as Ibsen with helicopters. It winces with liberal self-chastisement: Redford is surely smart enough to realize, as the professor turns his ire on those who merely chatter while Rome burns, that his movie is itself no better, or more morally effective, than high-concept Hollywood fiddling. He may even spare a smile for the harshest irony of all: the one scorching performance here, cheerfully laying waste to the niggles of the peacemakers, is that of Tom Cruise, who does for Republican warmongering what he did for the rampant libido in "Magnolia." In person, he is reportedly a Democrat, but the G.O.P. should poach him anyway; why settle for crusty old Fred Thompson when you could have young Top Gun himself? ♦

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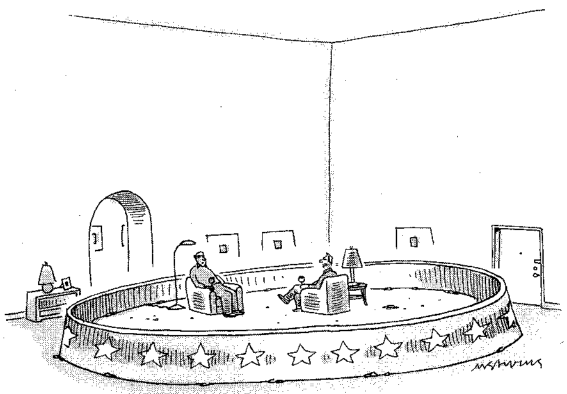
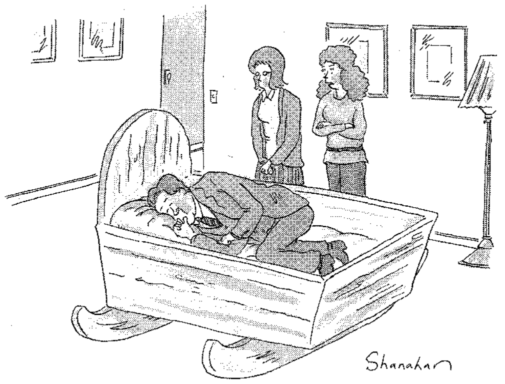
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Harry Bliss, must be received by Sunday, November 11th. Finalists in the October 29th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 26th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"My wife will be here any moment. She's loading herself into the cannon as we speak."
Elizabeth Ruelas, New York City



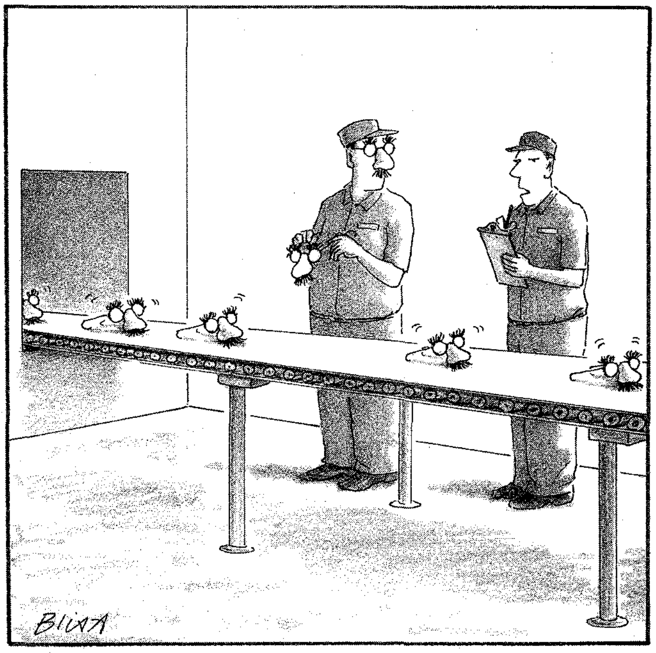
THE FINALISTS

"Make sure you burp him after his 11 A.M. conference call."
Ellen Teitel, Hoboken, N.J.

"He sleeps through the night as long as the market's stable."
Jim McNicholas, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"If he wakes up, you can give him a Martini."
Alan Schulman, Richmond, Va.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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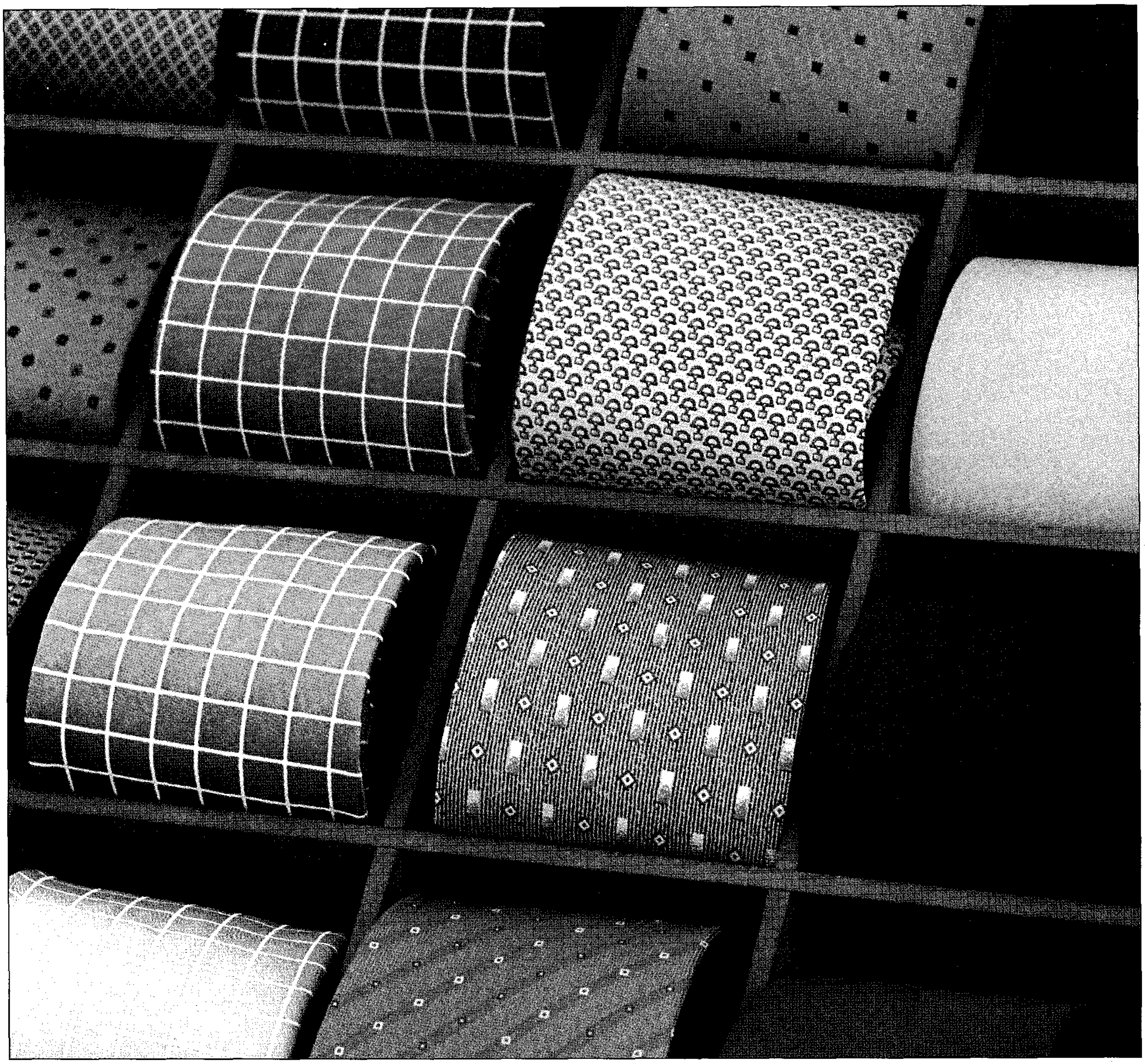

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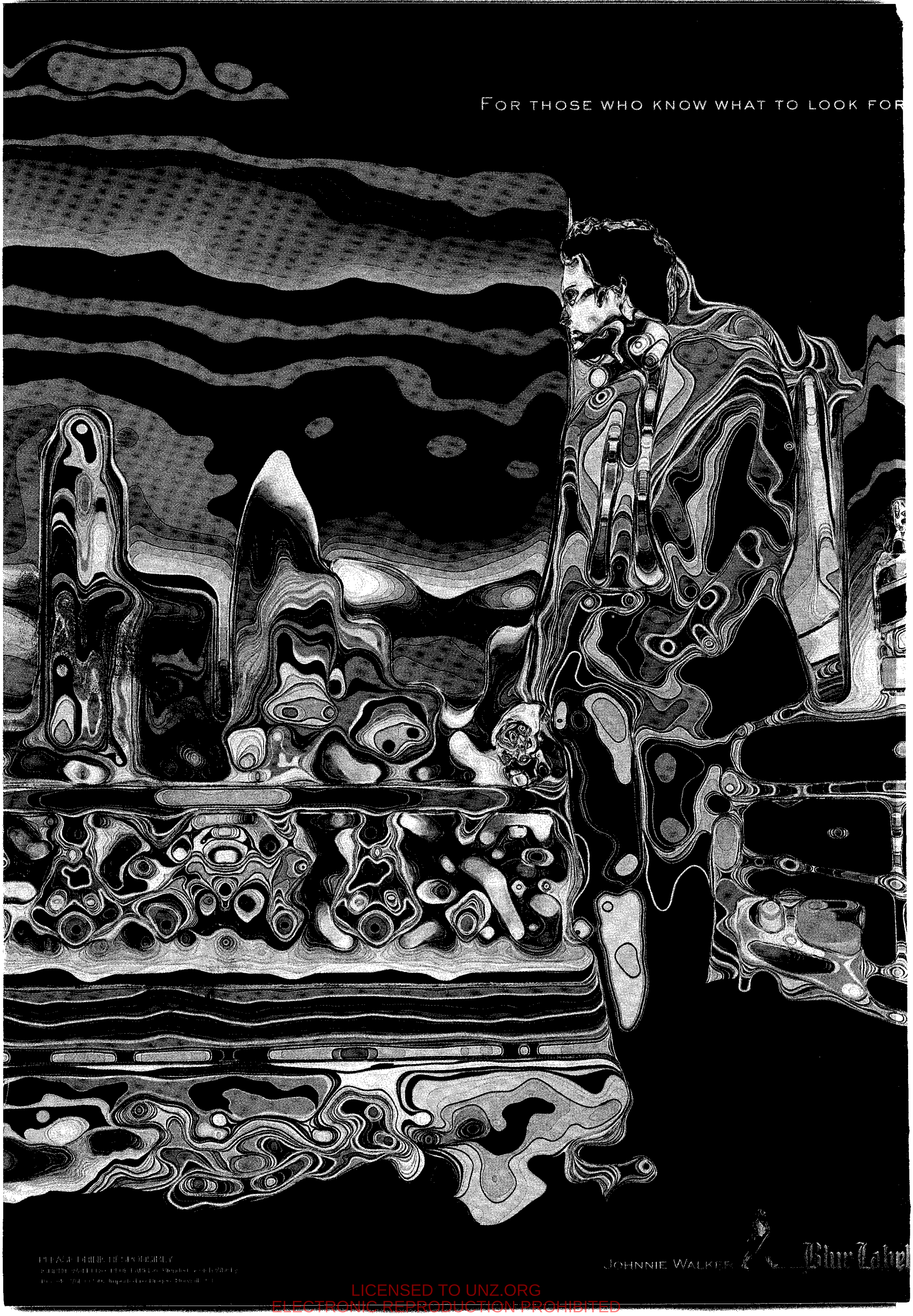
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